A PEOPLE PREPARED FOR THE LORD   
NO. 2404

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**To make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Luke 1:17.**

JOHN was the herald of Christhe was to prepare the way for the coming Kingbut from this text it appears that he was to do more than that. He was not only to make the road ready for the Lord, but he was also to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. That was a great work, a task in which he would require strength and wisdom greater than his own. He would need that the Spirit of God, who was to be given without measure to the coming One, should also be, in a measure, within himself, if he should really make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

This is not at all a usual expression. At first sight, it hardly looks to us like a Gospel expression. We sang just now   
*Just as I amand waiting not   
To rid my soul of one dark blot,   
To You, whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come.*

We sang over and over again those words, Just as I am, Just as I am, and we are prone to protest against the idea of being prepared for Christ. We constantly preach that no preparation is needed, but that men are to come to Jesus just as they are. Yet here is John the Baptist set apart, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

The fact is, dear Friends, that to get men to come to Jesus just as they are is not an easy thing. To get them to give up the idea of preparing, to get them prepared to come without preparing, to get them ready to come just as they arethis is the hardest part of our workthis is our greatest difficulty. If we came and preached to men the necessity of preparation through so many weeks of fasting during a long Lent, or through so many days of scourging and penitence, they would attend to us at once, for they would be willing enough to make any preparation of that kind! But, when we say to them, Come just as you are, with nothing in your hands to buy the mercy of God, with nothing wherewith to demand or to deserve it, men want a great deal of preparing before they will come to that point! Only the Grace of God, working mightily through the Word, by the Spirit, will prepare men to come to Christprepared by being unprepared so far as any fitness of their own is concerned. The only fit state in which they can come is that of sinking themselves, abandoning all idea of helping Christ, coming in all their natural impotence and guilt and taking Christ to be their All in All.

Beloved Friends, this is the true preparedness of heart for coming to Christthe preparedness of coming to Him just as you are! And it was Johns business, thus, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. That is also my business at this time. May the good Spirit, who dwelt in John the Baptist, work through us, also, that some here may be made ready for Christa people prepared for the Lord! Let us see how John carried out his commission. We shall then be better able to understand the text.

I. First, John made ready a people prepared for the Lord BY AWAKENING THEIR ATTENTION.   
The people were asleepthey had fallen into a condition of religious lethargy, when suddenly there stood in their midst a man clothed in camels hair and with a leather girdle about his loinsa Prophet, manifestly, by the boldness and truthfulness of his utterances. He spoke in such a way that the people in general heard of his speaking and they advertised him by saying, the one to the other, That is a strange man who has begun to preach by the River Jordan and whose meat is locusts and wild honey.   
The whole style of the man set the people wondering and talking. And when they came to listen to him, he did not flatter them! He did not utter mere commonplace truths to them, but with burning earnestness he drove straight at their hearts and spoke like Elijah, the great Prophet of fire, had done in the ages gone by. So he set them thinking. That is a great preparation for coming to Christ just as you are, to be set athinking! We have always hope of men when they once begin to think about religion and the things of God. See how the bulk of them hurry on with their eyes tightly shut, rushing fast and yet faster, still, down to destruction! You cannot make them stop and think. There are thousands of men who would almost sooner be whipped than be made to think. The last thing to which they will ever come, of themselves, is thoughtfulness!   
Let me appeal to some here who are still unconverted. Did you ever give the affairs of your soul the benefit of an hours serious consideration? You have your regular time for stocktaking, those of you who are in businessdo you ever take stock of your spiritual estate? I know that you are not such fools as to neglect your ledgers, you cast up your accounts to see where you are, financially, but do you cast up the account between God and your own soul, and look the matter fairly and squarely in the face? Oh, if we could but bring you to do this, we would feel that you were being prepared for coming to Christ just as you are, for no man will come to Christ while he is utterly careless and thoughtless! Faith is a matter of thoughtit requires a mind awakened from slumber, a mind that has taken wingand John the Baptist did good service for his Master when he startled men into that condition and so made them consider their ways.   
He did more than that, for, having first made them think, he preached to them a Savior. He told them that One was coming with power to baptize them after a higher sort than his baptism. He cried, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world, and this message infused into the people a measure of hope. The poor people said, What shall we do? for they had a hope that there was something to be gained. Even the tax-gatherers, despised as they were, began to look up and think that there might be something, even, for them, so they said to John, Master, what shall we do? And the rough Roman soldiers thought, There may be something for us, so they, also, asked, And what shall we do? John inspired the multitudes with hope.   
It is a very blessed state of mind for a man to get in when he begins to hope that he may be saved. Then he will be prepared to come to Jesus, just as he is, when he feels that he is not shut up to despair. Oh, says the poor man, I need not, after all, be lost! I need not abide forever under the wrath of God! There is an open door set before me, there is a way of mercy, even for me! I wish it were possible that everybody whom I am now addressing had that feelingit would be part of the making ready of a people prepared for the Lord when thought had blossomed into hope.   
But John led his hearers on further than that, for they began to expect something as well as to hope for it. They expected that the Christ would speedily come and they expected some great blessings through the coming of the Messiah. And oh, when men, after hearing the Gospel, have great expectations concerning God and His salvation, surely their expectations will not be long disappointed! I remember a man coming, one day, to see me. He said that he wished to take a sitting in the Tabernacle. He had been hearing me for some time and he wanted to take a seatbut he desired to be very honest with me and not to take a seat except upon a right understanding. I asked, What is the difficulty, my Friend? Well, he replied, the person who sat next to me on Sunday told me that if I became a regular hearer here, you would expect me to be converted. Well, I answered, that is true, I shall expect it. But, he said, you do not mean that you will require it of me. Oh, dear no! I replied, nothing of the sort. I do not expect you to convert yourself, but I hope and trust that you will be convertedthat is what I mean. I shall expect that God, in His Grace, will meet with you and save you.   
Oh, he said, I hope that, too! Only I mean that I could not guarantee it. Ah, I said, I see that you have taken the word, expect, in the wrong sense, but I think, dear Friend, that if you come expecting to be converted, and I preach expecting that you will be converted, it is highly probable that it will soon take place. Oh, he exclaimed, God grant it! The good Brother has long since gone to Heaven. A very few weeks after our conversation, he came and told me that the expectation in which we had united had been fulfilled and he trusted that he had found the Savior. When people come really expecting a blessing, they will be sure to get it! I believe that some folk go to hear ministers with the idea that there will be something to find fault with and, of course, they find that it is so. And when people come to hear another preacher, with the hope and expectation that God will bless them, of course God does bless them. Their expectation is Divinely fulfilled! I always have a bright hope that a man will lay hold on Christ when he begins to expect to be saved, for he feels, then, that the time has come for him to find eternal life. John made ready a people prepared for the Lord because, first, he led them to thought. Next, he led them to hope, and then he led them to expectation and this is a high measure of preparation!   
John did more than this, for he cried, Repent you: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, that is to say, he put a pressure of urgency upon the people. A Brother, who is an eminent preacher, but who uses rather long words, was explaining to me the benefit of the preaching of Mr. Fullerton and Mr. Smith in his place of worship. He said, I do not know exactly why these Brothers were the means of the conversion of many in my place whom I had never reached, but I perceived that they had the power to precipitate decision. It sounded rather strange, but when I thought it over a little while, I rather liked the expression, the power to precipitate decision. That is the power that leads men to make up their minds and say, Yes, or, Noto feel that the decision has to be made at once and that the putting of it off is impossible because it would be a kind of insanity! Now that is the meaning of what John said, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand! Repent you! He is coming who wields the axe of Divine Justicebear fruit, or else be cut down! He is coming who uses the great winnowing fanbe the true wheat, or else be blown away. He put the Truth of God so pointedly and so earnestly, that he did, by that means, make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

II. Now, secondly, John made the people ready for CHRIST BY AWAKENING THEIR CONSCIENCES.   
His very first utterance, as I have reminded you, was, Repent you, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Repent! Repent! Repent! was Johns continual cry. This awakened the consciences of his hearers concerning their sin. Preaching repentance meant, You have sinned! Change your mind in reference to that sin you have sinnedquit the sin, mourn over it, ask forgiveness for it. Repent! Whenever a man brings to the minds of others their sinswhen he does it so that they begin to feel that they have sinnedthen they are being prepared for the Lord, for no man will come to the Savior unless he knows that he needs a Savior. And no man will feel that he needs a Savior until he feels that he is a sinner. Hence it is a real preparation of men for Christ to convince them of sin.   
This John did. He brought their sin before them and then he showed them their need of cleansing, for he stood by the River Jordan, not with a scallop shell, as some depict him, but he stood by the flowing stream ready to immerse all those who repented! This was practically saying to them, You need to be washed, you need to be cleansed, and I show you this Truth of God as I baptize you with water unto repentance. Be this a token to you that there is no entering Heaven in your filthiness, but you must first be washed! As your bodies are washed with pure water, so must your souls be washed and made clean before you can enter Heaven. This was Johns plain teaching by his action as well as by his words.   
Then he went very straight to his point of awakening their consciences by telling them of their need of a change of life. He said that it was no use for them to pretend to grieve over the past and then continue to sin in the same fashion. Bring forth fruits, he said, meet for repentance, or, answerable to amendment of life, as the margin has it. And he took pains to point out what the fruits must be. If they were men of greed, they must become generous and give to their needy neighbors. If they had been unrighteous and exacting, they must become honest. If they had been domineering and brutal, and murmuring, they must become contented and quiet, and gentle.   
He not only preached to the multitudes about repentance of sin in general, but he pointed out the precise sin of each class of persons that came to him and urged them to perform the special duties which they had neglected. Now, Brothers and Sisters, I believe, as I have often said, that there is no sewing with silk thread, aloneyou must have a needle as well! You need a sharp needle to, first, draw the thread through the material. And so you must preach the Law. You must denounce sin and you must individualize and condemn special sins. And you must be personal and pointed, or else men will not feel in their consciences what you say to them. Conscience is very apt to get seared as with a hot ironto lose sensitivenessso as to be no use at all as a conscience. Some say that conscience is a spark of deity, a divine monitorit is nothing of the sort! In many a man it is almost extinct, for it does not act at all! The preacher who would make ready a people prepared for the Lord must come out with his axe and lay it to the root of the trees! He must be definite and distinct in indicating this sin and that sin, and crying to all men, Repent of these sins! Give them up! Get clear from them! Be washed from them or else, as God lives, when the Christ, Himself, comes, it will not be to save you, but to blow you away with His winnowing fan as the chaff is blown into the fire!   
This is to make ready a people prepared for the Lordby their being convinced of sin and led to repentance. That, I think, is a second meaning clearly illustrated in the ministry of John the Baptist.   
III. But thirdly, John had to make ready a people prepared for the Lord BY POINTING OUT THE NATURE OF TRUE RELIGION.   
He showed that it did not depend upon external privileges. As soon as John began to preach, the men of Jewish race, proud of their pedigree, pressed near, and John, with all the courage that a servant of the Lord could have, said, Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father, for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. You see the drift of his preaching, do you not? He says, practically, Men and women, there is no virtue in your boasted privileges. There is no merit in your religious descent. As for supposing yourselves to be the peculiar people of God, you are not to be saved that way. Say not, We have Abraham as our father. Oh, how many hug that idea, My father was a Christian. Others say, Well, I live in a Christian country. They suppose that there is something in the very race from which they have sprung! Away with all such notions, for whatever external privileges you may have had, they are not sufficient to secure salvation for you!   
Then came the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They were the religious people of the time, the great observers of all outward propriety, but John taught them that true religion is not the same as official pretension. He called them a generation of vipers. This was very disrespectful and very shocking, indeed, on his part! All the newspapers of the period, if there had been any, would have cried him down for his lack of charity, but he wanted those who came to him to understand that true religion was not the same as professing to be religious! It was not making broad the borders of their garments. It was not wearing a text of Scripture as a phylactery between their eyes. It was not making long prayers at the corners of the streets that would save themthere must be a thorough change of heart! So John spoke right straight out and this, I believe, is a great way of preparing men for coming to Christ, when you tell them, It is not your early training, it is not your going to Church or Chapel, it is not your infant sprinkling and your confirmation! It is not even your adult Baptism, nor your saying prayers and reading the Bible that will save youyou must be born again. There must be an inward spiritual change worked by the Holy Spirit! You must believe in Jesus Christ, whom God has sent, and you must so believe in Him as to be made new creatures in Him or else you cannot be saved. Now, when men realize that all this is true, it startles them out of their false refuges and makes them ready to flee to the only true Refuge, so that it is really the way of making ready a people prepared for the Lord.   
While John set forth this matter negatively, putting down all the wrong hopes of his hearers, he was exceedingly plain in telling them that the way of salvation would involve them in the necessity of being right before God. There, he said, the proof of a trees life is its fruit and the evidence of your new life will be your good works. Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees and, therefore, every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Unless our religion makes us holy, it has not done anything for us that is really worth doing! Unless we hate sin and love righteousness, our religion is a sham and a lie! John stated that Truth of God very plainlyand that is the way to drive men to Christ.   
He also told them that the trial of a life would be by its weight as well as by its fruit. Look, he said, at the heap that lies on the threshing floor. He that has the fan in his hand begins to winnow it. That which is light and chaffy is blown away. That which has wheat in it remains on the floor. So, he said, there must be weight about your religion stability, reality, sincerity. There must be heart-work in it. It must be no pretense. It must be true from beginning to end or else it shall be no more use to you than a heap of chaff would avail the farmer when it is blown into the fire.   
Then John taught his hearers that Christ, Himself, would be the great Trier of human heartsnot ministers or fellow professors, but Christ, Himself. When men feel this to be true, then they begin to say to themselves, There is more required than we, at present, possess. There is more demanded than we can ever manufacture of ourselves. Let us go to Him that has it and ask Him for it. Let us go to Christ, who has Grace to bestow upon the poor and needy. This, then, is the way to make ready a people prepared for the Lord, by pointing out to them the nature of true religion. That is what I have tried to do, dear Hearer. When you know that you cannot save yourself, you sing   
*Not the labors of my hands   
Can fulfill Your Laws demands.   
Could my zeal no respite know,   
Could my tears forever flow,   
All for sin could not atone.*   
And then you are ready to finish the verse by singing   
**You must save, and You, alone.**   
IV. Now. I shall close my discourse by noticing a fourth way in which John made ready a people prepared for the Lord. He did it BY DECLARING THE GRACE AND POWER OF JESUS CHRIST.  
My Brothers and Sisters, if I were to preach to you merely to awaken your attention, to awaken your consciences to a sense of sin, or simply to show you the nature of true religion, yet you would not be prepared for Christ unless you also knew something about Him, something about His suitableness and His power to save you. So, John preached Jesus Christ as a mighty and glorious Savior on whom the Spirit rested. He said, when he baptized our Lord, as Jesus came up out of the water, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not, but He that sent me to baptize with water, the Same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. John boldly preached and told the people that the Spirit of God rested upon Jesus Christ, yes, abode upon Him!   
Now, this would lead them to Him, and this should lead you to Him. Whatever there is, poor Souls, that you need to make you holy and perfect, Christ has it, for the Spirit of God rests on Him and abides in Him without measure! If you need the Grace of penitence, Christ has it to give to you. If you need the Grace of supplication, He has it to give to you. If you need the Grace of faith, He has it! If you need the Grace of holiness, He has it. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell. And of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace. John taught this to his hearers and I teach it to you. There is nothing needed between Hell and Heaven but what is in Christ! Nothing needed for the biggest sinner out of Hell to make him the biggest saint in Heaven but what Christ has! Nothing needed in any hour of temptation, in any time of depressionnothing needed in any moment of sickness, or in the article of death, itselfbut what it is in Christ and, there for you, if you trust Him! If you are willing to have it, it is freely presented to you. He who makes you willing to receive, is certainly willing to give! If He has emptied you and prepared you to receive of His fullness, do not think that He will refuse you when you come to Him for it! He has said, Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.

Last Sunday morning, I blew the great trumpet in the hope of startling some to Christ [Sermon #1951, Volume 33The Pleading of the Last

MessengerRead/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org . ] On this

occasion, I would ring the little silver bell with a gentle noise in the hope that some may, by that means, be made willing to come to Christ! My Hearer, you can need nothing which Christ does not possessall your requirements are fully met in Him. The Spirit of God dwells in Him as a fullnessas an abiding fullnesstherefore, do but believe in Him! And even that faith He will give you! Do but trust Him and you are saved, and fully supplied in Him who can meet all the necessities of your case.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, John taught the people this that they might be ready for Christa people prepared for the Lordfor, when men begin to see what a Christ, Christ is, what a Savior the Savior is, then they are ready to come to Him! And I pray that many of you may so come to Him even now.

John also told his hearers that the Christ whom he preached was able to baptize them with the Holy Spirit. See, he says, I only plunge you in the flowing stream. I can do nothing more for you than dip you in this River Jordan, on profession of your repentance of sin. But this Savior, this Christ of God, can immerse you into the Spirit of God! He can give you of His power to fill youyou can be baptized into the Holy Spirit by Him. Do you hear this, Sinner? Jesus Christ can come and give you the Holy Spirit in such measure that you shall be baptized into Him

*Plunged in the Godheads deepest sea,*

*And lost in His immensity.*   
This will make you to be really His and make you truly to live unto Him. The very fullness of Grace, then, is with Christ, and He is prepared to give itand this should make men prepared to receive it! Did not the poor prodigal son say of the provision in his fathers house, There is bread enough and to spare? It was partly that which made him go to his fathers house and we may say of the Spirit who is in Christ, There is enough and to spare for every poor sinner who comes to Himtherefore, come along with yoube prepared at once to come and receive the Savior!

Lastly, John said in his preaching, Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. He pointed out Christ as the Sin-Bearer, bearing human guilt in His own Person. That is the master key which lets men into the Kingdom of Heaven. Oh, how I delight to preach Christ as the Substitute, Christ as the atoning Sacrifice! And when you have heard Christ preached in that way, it makes you readya people prepared for the Lord. How can men come to Christ if they do not know what Christ has done for them? If you do not understand that He suffered in your place, the Just for the unjust, to bring you to God, how can you come to Christ? But when you have learned that holy and blessed doctrine of Christs Propitiation for human sin, why, then, I think you will leap at the very sound of it and say, Yes, I will take this Propitiation to be a Sacrifice for me! Blessed Lamb of God

*My faith would lay her hands   
On that dear head of Yours   
While like a penitent I stand   
And there confess my sin.*

Johns preaching Christ was the best way of making ready a people prepared for the Lord, and there is no better way of preparing you to come to Jesus. Oh, that God would grant to some of you that precipitation of decision of which my learned friend spoke! Oh, that in some lives the turning point might be reached tonightthe happy moment when they should decide for Christ! Lord, decide them! My Friend, you have come to the crossroadsperhaps, tonightif you reject the Savior, it will be your last rejection of Him and it will finally seal your doom! And I am sure, with no perhaps whatever, that if this night you look to Jesus and trust to His finished work, you shall be saved and saved forever!

Here is a text for youWhoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Is not that a wonderful whoever? Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord in believing prayer, asking mercy, trusting Christ for mercy, shall be saved. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. He that believes on the Son has everlasting life. Most of you know these texts by heartgrip them as with hooks of steel! If you say that you are hungry and I put a loaf of bread in front of you, will you sit and look at it all night? If I meet you in a weeks time, will you still complain that you are hungry while there is the bread, in front of you, still untouched? You deserve to be hungry if that is the case! You deserve to be famished to death if the bread, being there, you do not take it. Take it and eat it. May I have it? asks one. Well, you are commanded to have itthis is not a matter that is left to your option! The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent. Our Lord, Himself, said, Repent, you, and believe the Gospel. It is, therefore, a Gospel command that you should repent and believeand truly you may obey a command given by the Lord, Himself! There is no question about your permission to obey itobey it at once and take Christ to yourself!

You do not know me, says a sorrowing one over there in the corner, you do not know me, Sir. Otherwise you would not talk so. I do not need to know you, but if you were the devils own, if you would but come to Christ, you would be, at once and forever, Christs own! Though you were sunk almost into Hell by a life of horrible crime, yet if you will now come and repent of your sin and lay hold on Christ, you shall be saved! I do not know how to use language that shall be stronger than that, but do not think that I will withdraw it, or qualify it. If I did know how to speak in broader terms, even, than those I have used, I would so speak! You guiltiest of the guilty, you most condemned of all the condemned, for whom the hottest Hell would be your due place, yet come and look to Christ, and you shall live, for none are too vile for Him to cleanse, none are too guilty for Him to pardon! Oh, that you would believe in Jesus while yet the Gospel bell rings out, mercy, mercy, mercy! God help you to do so, for the Lord Jesus Christs sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LUKE 1:5-17, 3:1-18.**

Luke 1:5, 6. There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abia; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. You have, here, a very interesting couple, Zacharias and Elizabetha priest with a wife. I have often marveled why the Church of Rome thinks it wrong that priests should be married when it is evident that the priests under the Law were so. The priests had grown so numerous that there was not room for them all to work at the Temple at one time. They were divided into 24 divisions and Zacharias would, therefore, come up to Jerusalem for a fortnight to take his share of the service. Zacharias and Elizabeth were notable for excellence of characterThey were both righteous before God. Not only did they stand high in the esteem of men, but the great God who reads the hearts of all and sees how they live in secret, reckoned them to be righteousThey were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandmentsthat is, in the moral precepts of the Lawand ordinancesthat is in the ceremonial ritesof the Lord, blameless.

7-9. And they had no child because Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well advanced in years. And it came to pass that while he executed the priests office before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priests office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the Temple of the Lord. Certain offices of the priest were considered to be more honorable than others and so, to prevent any jealousy, they cast lots as to which they should take in turn. It fell to the lot of Zacharias to burn incensethis did not happen by chance. The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord, and there was a special reason why this good man should stand at the altar at this particular time.

10. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the time of incense. While he, in the inner shrine, was burning incense, the multitudes in the outer courts were engaging in prayer. I think that is a very beautiful symbolthe priest unseen, like the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy of Holies aboveand the mass of the people engaged in prayer while the unseen priest is offering the sacred perfume before the altar of Jehovah.

11, 12. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. He was a good man, yet he was troubled at the sight of an angel. Consciousness of sin, even in an outwardly blameless man, makes us all tremble in the presence of anything heavenly. This bright spirit had come fresh from the courts of God. He was a courtier of the heavenly Temple and he had come down, all of a sudden, with a sweet and cheering message for the earthly priest. But the priest was troubled, and fear fell upon him. Brothers and Sisters, we cannot know much of Heaven, here below, because it would cause us to tremble. We are as yet unfit for all the glories of that upper state. Good John Berridge wrote

*And now they range the heavenly plains And sing their hymns in melting strains.   
And now their souls begin to prove   
The heights and depths of Jesus love.   
Ah, Lord, with tardy steps I creep   
And sometimes sing, and sometimes weep! Yet strip me of this house of clay   
And I will sing as loud as they.*

Yes, and so will wewe will be as much at home as the happy saints who dwell in lightwhen once we are delivered from this hampering flesh and blood!

13. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard. The best quietus to fear is answered prayer! If God has heard you, be not you, again, afraid.

13. And your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name, John. The Grace or, the gift of God, so the name, John, signifies. And it is a sweet name for anyone to bear. You shall call his name, John. I do not think the prayer alluded to here was so much a prayer for a son. If so, I Think that Zacharias had long ago left off praying it, and now his old prayers are heard, after he had discontinued them. I think that it alludes, rather, to his prayer for the coming of the Christ, the appearance of the Messiahthat prayer was heard, as we shall see further on.

14, 15. And you shall have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. I do not say that it is the duty of every man to drink neither wine nor strong drink, but I beg every man to notice that if anyone was to be peculiarly consecrated to a holy calling, it was always to be so. He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. If there is nothing defiling about wine or strong drink, there is certainly nothing sanctifying about itand the tendency seems to lie the other way, else it is a strange thing that men dedicated to God were so continually bid to drink neither wine nor strong drink.

15-17. And he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mothers womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord, their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. In the third chapter of this Gospel you will find the record of John beginning to fulfill this prophecy concerning himself.

Luke 3:1-7. Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the Book of the words of Isaiah the Prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Does not John the Baptist speak like Elijah? Here are no honeyed phrases to delight the popular ear! The Prophet of the wilderness talks like one who is all on fire with zeal for God and indignation against evil.

8-11. Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree, therefore, which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do, then? He answered and said to them, He that has two coats, let him impart to him that has none; and he that has meat, let him do likewise. John was wonderfully practical in his advocacy of a holy charity and benevolence. His words cut against all greed, all hoarding, all hardening of the heart towards our fellow men.

12, 13. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. They were accustomed to gather the taxes unfairly and to increase the rates by oppressing the people, getting, perhaps, twice or even ten times more out of them than they could legally claim! John speaks to the point, does he not?

14. And the soldiers, likewise, demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man. Those rough Roman soldiers, as they had conquered the country, were very apt to treat the people as though they were their slaves, so John says to them, Do violence to no man

14. Neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. With your rations, your allowances, so it runs. They were very apt to be contending for an increase in their pay and to drag civilians before the courts with false accusations unless they chose to give them bribes to let them go. John does not mince matters with any of his hearershe speaks with wonderful plainness and courageand therein proves himself to be a true herald of his Master.

15-18. And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not, John answered, saying unto them all, I, indeed, baptize you with water; but One mightier than I comes, the laces of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloosen. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable. And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1405 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A DISTINCTION WITH A DIFFERENCE   
NO. 1405

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.   
And Zacharias said unto the angel, How shall I know this? Luke 1:18.   
Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be? Luke 1:34.

ZACHARIAS and the Virgin Mary were both very dear to God and, therefore, highly honored and greatly favored. The points of likeness between them are many. They were both persons of eminent character, for Zacharias walked blameless in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord and Mary was equally gracious and devout. They were both visited by an angel and were both favored with the prediction of a marvelous birth. Their answers to the angel are our two texts and, at first sight, they seem to be alike. One does not see much less of faith or of unbelief in the one than in the other at first reading them and, yet, Zacharias was blamed and chastened by being made dumb for a season. On the other hand, the Virgin was indulged with an explanation and was afterwards praised by the Holy Spirit who spoke through her cousin Elizabeth and said, Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

It appears very clear, then, that God can see differences where we see none. Though two persons may act very much alike and from their lips may fall similar expressions, yet their temper and spirit may be widely different Where you and I would put them together and say, They are alike, God sees a difference. While we judge sights and sounds, the Lord weighs the spirits. You must have noticed this in other parts of Gods Word. I will give you two instances in the life of Abraham. Lot was commanded not to look towards Sodom, but his wife, after looking to Sodom, was turned into a pillar of salt. And yet that morning Abraham got up early to the place where he was known to meet with the Lord and it is recorded that he looked toward Sodom.

The very thing which Lot must not do, Abraham may do. It is the same action but, if you think a moment, you can clearly see that the looking back of Lot would mean a lingering desire to return, but the look of Abraham had nothing of that kind in it and could have no evil significance. He was simply looking to the burning cities and admiring with solemn awe the justice of the Most High as he saw the heavens ruddy with flame and afterwards dark with dense clouds, while the smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace. The action was the same externally, but widely different in reality. The Lord God does not so much regard our outward acts as the motives which direct them and the spirit in which they are performed. Perhaps a more remarkable instance is that of Abraham and his wife

Sarah. When they each received a distinct promise of the birth of Isaac, it is said that Abraham fell upon his face and laughed. And then we read a little farther on, Sarah laughed within herself. We never find that Abraham was censured for laughing. He laughed rightly. It was the natural expression of a wondering and amazed delight. It was holy laughter and he was not censured nor called to account for it. But the Lord said unto him, Why did Sarah laugh? Sarah was censured for doing the very thing which in Abraham was quite right and did not need to be corrected!

They both laughedthe one was right, but the other was wrong. Why? Because there was a vital difference between them. Sarahs was the laugh of unbeliefshe thought it could not be that at her age she should bear a child, her lord also being old. She laughed at the very idea! It seemed altogether too absurd. The mere notion struck her as being perfectly ridiculous and, though a devout woman, she somewhat forgot the reverence due to Him who gave the promise and she laughed, though in a subdued and quiet way, within herself.

Abraham believed that the Divine promise would be performed and his was the laugh of joy to think that he should see a son born to his beloved Sarah who should be his heir and the inheritor of the Covenant. His soul danced within him with delight because he believed what the Lord had spoken. Yet the two actions outwardly are so exactly similar that if you condemn one, you think you must condemn the other! But God does not, since He sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. We may apply this great Truth of God to ourselves. We all sang the same hymn just now to the same tuneand yet from one it may have been to Gods ear music and from another mockery. We closed our eyes just now and bowed our heads in prayeranyone looking upon us might have supposed us to be all equally acceptedbut the Lord knows in whose case the heart was wandering upon the mountains of vanity and in whose case the soul, with all its powers, was crying out unto the living God.

Judge yourselves, Beloved, but never judge yourselves according to the sight of the eyes! And never be satisfied with yourselves because externally everything is correctbecause you have passed through the routine of religion and attended to the machinery of the outward form. Do not be content with postures, sounds and looksthe soul is the soul of the matter! Look at the heart and cry to God, also, that He would search you and make you clean in the secret partsand in the hidden parts make you to know wisdom. Otherwise you may stand as Gods people do and go in and out of the House of Prayer even as the brightest of the saints do and never be separated from them until the trumpet rings out the Great Tremendous Day and you are sent to the left with the goats to be withered by a curse while His people on His right hand shall receive the blessing forever!

Let us all remember that there may be an external similarity in apparent right or wrong and yet there may be an inward and a real dissimilarity. It is the inward that is the real, not the outwardand the great Judge will search and try and separate between the precious and the vile though the vile may seem to be more beautiful than the precious genuine diamond. But now, leaving the general principle, I invite you, dear Friends, to come back to my texts and accompany me in looking at these two persons to see whether there is not a difference perceptible by ourselves. And I think we shall find a great deal more diversity than we had expected. I cannot work out the whole matter in one sermon, but some prominent points will, I hope, interest and profit you.

I. First let us take the case of ZACHARIAS who said, HOW SHALL I KNOW THIS? And notice, to begin with, that supposing the two expressions of Zacharias and Mary had been identical, and supposing that they had conveyed the same thoughts, yet if they had both been wrong, Zacharias would have been the more faulty of the two, for he was a priesta man set apart by office to study the Word of God and to draw peculiarly near to God on his own account and for the people. Mary was simply a humble village maid. Mary, it is true, was of royal descent, but her family had fallen into obscurity. She was a person of superior mind, but she held no office that could distinguish her from others.

Zacharias, being a priest, was bound to act with a higher degree of faith than Mary, the lowly maiden. The priests lips should keep knowledge and teach many. Were not the priests set apart to be instructors of the people, helpers of those that are weak and guides of those who are ignorant and out of the way? They should, therefore, in all things set an example. If Mary had been unbelieving and Zacharias unbelievingand both unbelieving to the same extentyet in Zacharias it would have been much worse because his very office called upon him to display greater Grace than the humble maiden.

Brothers and Sisters, may I not apply this to myself and to you? Brother ministers, if we are unbelieving, we, in our unbelief, do not sin so cheaply as our people! We have more time to study the Word of God and, therefore, we have, or ought to have, more acquaintance with it. We are more familiar with Divine things and ought to be more richly filled with their faith-creating spirit. If the Lord has been pleased to make us undershepherds over His people, we are bound to be examples to the flock. Our high position demands of us the exhibition of a greater degree of Divine Grace than we can expect from common Believers, who are Gods dear people, but are not set apart to be leaders.

The same line of argument will apply in due proportion to each servant of our Lord Jesus. According to their measure of Grace, more is expected of some than of others. You, dear Sisters, who teach young people should remember that they watch you and they expect to see in you a bright example. And, what is more, God, who has placed you in the position of teachers, or of mothers, intends that there should be in you, by His Grace, something that others may look up to, that the young beginners may learn from you. Take heed that they never learn unbelief from your doubting! Let them never see in you that worry, that anxiety, that fretfulness which denotes the absence of a calm reliance upon God, but let

them, whatever they gather from you, learn that which is worth knowing.

And what can be a better lesson than that of faith in God? You who are in the Church, dear Friends, preachers, elders, deacons and instructors of others, see to it that your lives and words do not breed unbelief! Especially do I speak to myself upon this point, for, being much exercised in spirit, I tremble lest I should suggest to any of you doubts and fears, or encourage you in them. Let those of us who are guides of others see to it that we do not dishonor God by mistrust and questioning, for unbelief in us is a glaring fault and God will surely visit it upon us, even if He winks at it in the weak ones of the flock.

Again, in Zacharias case it was not merely his office that distinguished him, but he was a man of years. We read that both he and his wife were well stricken in years. Now, a man who has had a long experience of the things of Goda man of prayer who has had many answersa man of trouble who has had many deliverances. A man who has seen the hand of God with him in a long journey through the wilderness of life is expected, by God, to exhibit a far stronger faith than the young people who have but lately learned His name. I speak to many here who are by far my seniors, of whom I may say that they were in Christ before me and they must pardon my saying that they should have more faith than I by reason of their years of constant experience of the Lords faithfulness.

And I, too, who have known the Lord, now, for a considerable number of years, must never put myself down with those who were converted during the last few months and say that I am to have no more faith than they. Shame upon every one of us if every day does not bring us fresh motives for believing in our Lord! Every hour, indeed, should be filled with arguments for a more complete childlike trust in Him. What? Dear Sister, did the Lord help you in such-and-such a strait? And do you not remember that you said, I shall never doubt Him again? And yet you have done so! Ah, how grievous must those doubts be to your gracious Lord!

I know at one time you thought you would never be delivered, but you were mercifully lifted up from the depthsout of six troubles you have been rescued and in seven no evil has touched you! And now that a fresh trial is come, will you not believe your God? Well, if you do not, you will certainly incur very grievous sin and vex the Holy Spirit of God much more than your poor little sister, Mary, would do, if, having only lately known the Savior, she should distrust Him in her first conflicts. Babes in Grace should not doubt, but if they do, their unbelief is not so willful as that of fathers in Israel. If standard bearers faint, it is a sad calamity, and the faintness of poor wounded common soldiers is far less to be deplored.

When aged Zacharias errs in this matter he is more to be blamed than youthful Mary. Those two points are pretty clear, are they not? Furthermore, let us observe that Zacharias had made the birth of a child a subject of prayer, which, I suppose, had not so much as been thought of by Mary. Beyond the fact that it was the usual desire of all Hebrew women that they might be the mother of the Messiah, the Virgin had probably never cast a single thought in the direction in which the angels salutation conducted her. Assuredly she had never made it a subject of prayer, but Zacharias had rightly done so. Read the 13th verse, The angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son. And yet, though the promise came as a distinct and manifest answer to his prayers, Zacharias asked, How shall I know this?

Now, this was wrong! It was very wrong. He had been praying for it and when it came, he did not believe it! Ah, Zacharias, you are verily guilty here. If it had come as a surprise altogether, as it did to Mary, there would be some excuse for your doubt. But when it is a reply to your own entreatiesa gracious yielding to intense requestsyour unbelieving question is a grievous fault! If, when taken by surprise, Mary had doubted, it would have appeared natural, but for you, Zachariasfor you to whom the angel said, Your prayer is heardhow do you doubt it? Astonishment at answered prayers is amazement at Divine truthfulness! And what is that but a low idea of the Lord unintentionally discovering itself?

Yet I have sometimes thought that if the Lord wished to surprise His own servants, all He would have to do would be to answer their prayers! He does answer them continually and in consequence you hear one and another say, Is it not surprising? You see, we met and had a prayer meeting for a certain blessing and the Lord has answered our supplications. How marvelous! And yet if you sit down in a friends house, do his children try to astonish you by mentioning cases in which their father kept his word? Do they dwell with amazement upon his having spoken the truth? I could wish that the Lords children would even get as far as that! Alas, they even overlook the majority of the facts which prove His veracity, and slight His faithfulness!

When His people are in a better frame than usual they admit His faithfulness and mention as a great wonder that He heard prayer and fulfilled His Word! Should this be so? Has it come to pass that it is a wonder for God to hear prayer? Have we fallen into such a low state of heart that we think His truthfulness to be a surprising thing? It were far better if we were of the same mind as a good old lady who, when someone said, Is it not wonderful? replied, Well, it is in one way, but it is not in another, for it is just like Himjust like Him. We may well be surprised at the tenderness of His great mercy, but not as though it were a novelty for God to do good and to keep His promise by regarding His peoples cries!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we ought to be surprised if the Lord did not hear us, seeing that He is the true and faithful, prayer-hearing God. When you and I have had a matter heavily laid upon our hearts and have been before God with it again and again, as doubtless Zacharias had, we should be looking for our Lords gracious reply. Do we not expect answers to letters which we write to our friends? Why do we not, in like fashion, expect replies to prayer? If God answers us, are we to be so doubtful in mind as even to question the truthfulness of the blessing? If so, we shall be manifestly guilty. If the Lord sends us a mercy in reply to our requests and we do not believe it, but say, How shall I know this? then our unbelief has a peculiar degree of provocation in it and we may expect to be chastened for it. This was the case with Zacharias.

The next point about Zacharias is that he doubted the fact which was announced by the angel in the name of the Lord. He said, How shall I know this? Mary did not doubt the factshe wished to know how it could be, but she believed it would be. She believed, for it was said of her, Blessed is she that believed. But this good man did not believe, for the angel said to Him, You believe not my words which shall be fulfilled in their season. Now, Beloved, when it comes to this, that we dare to doubt the promise of God, is it not a very grievous crime? If your childyour own child whom you have loved so long and treated so tenderlyif he should fall into a state of mind in which he did not believe you, his own fatherwould you not feel it to be peculiarly grievous?

If you were conscious of nothing but love for him. If you were sure that throughout his life you had never broken a promise to him, but had always been as good as your word. If you had repeated your promise again and again and he still said, Father, I wish I could believe you, would you not be cut to the heart by such a declaration? The more earnestly he expressed regret at his inability to believe you, the more intense would be your pain. What an awful speech for a son to address to a fatherI wish I could believe you!

You would grieve in spirit and say inwardly, What does my boy think of me? What has come over my child that he cannot believe me? It was not an enemy, then I could have borne itbut it is my child whom I love who says not only that he does not believe me, but that he would do so if he could and finds himself unable to think me true. He speaks in deep earnest and thus I see how thoroughly the cruel feeling possesses him and how desperate is the evil which leads him to mistrust my love.

Ah, Beloved, I leave your own thoughts, as I must just now leave mine, to peer into the depths of sin which must lie in what we sometimes talk of so flippantly, namely, doubts and fears! They are not the trifles which some men dream them to bethey are hideous profanities of the sacred Truth of God! They are revolting libels upon immaculate goodness! They are horrid blasphemies of infinite love! Shall the good God be thus assailed? Shall His own children thus abuse Him? Your child might doubt you and it might be a trifle to him, but it would be death to you, his father or mother. You would feel it keenly and so you may think that doubts and fears are trifles, but your heavenly Father does not think sounbelief wounds Him and grieves His Spirit!

Hear what the Lord saysHow long will it be before they believe Me? Forget not the Apostles warning in the third chapter of the Hebrews. With whom was He grieved 40 years? And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? Zacharias did not believe and he had to smart for it, as you and I shall if we, when we see a promise written clearly in Gods Word and evidently quite adapted to our case, nevertheless say, How shall I know this? Yet further. The good man Zachariasfor, remember, I am not doubting his Grace, but, on the contrary, I began by saying that he was a very gracious and eminently godly man. He was probably much better than any of us and possibly, in some respects, even more gracious than Mary herself, having a deeper experience, a fuller knowledge, greater courage and many other superior gifts and Gracesalthough in this point he failedhe doubted his Lord and showed his unbelief by asking for a sign, How shall I know this? He needed a sign or a token that what the angel spoke was true.

This was not the case with Mary, who sought an explanation but not a token. Is it wrong, then, to ask for a token? Assuredly not in all cases, for it may even be sinful not to ask for one, as in the case of Ahaz, of whom we read, Moreover the Lord spoke again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask for a sign of the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And He said, Hear you now, O house of David. Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary God, also? In the case of Ahaz it was sinful to refuse and in that of Zacharias sinful to request.

Here again I must come back to the remark I started with and remind you that the same thing may be right in one man and wrong in another, according to the motive. It is very curious that Abraham used almost identical words with Zacharias, when he said, How shall I know that I shall inherit this land? He distinctly asked the Lord for a sign, nor was the request at all grievous to the Lord, for He knew that His servant Abraham asked that sign in all humility and childlike faith. Let me show you at once the difference between Abraham and Zacharias. Zacharias will not believe without a signAbraham has already believed and waited long for the fulfillment of the promiseand feels that a sign would be comforting to him.

It could in no sense have been said to the great father of the faithful, Except you see signs and wonders you will not believe, but some such rebuke might have been directed towards Zacharias. There was conspicuous faith in Abraham and the desire for a token was natural rather than sinful. So was it with Gideon who asked for many signs. You see at the very first that Gideon believes and he acts upon his faith. But he trembles because his faith is weak and he asks for signs to strengthen his confidence. Indeed, he did not distrust the Lord at all, but only questioned whether it was the Lord who spoke. Gideon said, If now I have found grace in Your sight, then show me a sign that You talk with me.

The question, you see, was not the truthfulness of God, but whether, indeed, if the Lord had spoken! Zacharias, however, asks an altogether unbelieving question, How shall I know this? He wants a sign as the condition of his believing. You may very rightly pray, Lord, show me a token for good, but you must believe before you get the token and you must not let your believing depend upon that token. There is a differencea wide difference between believing first and then asking for some cheering evidenceand that unbelieving obstinacy which demands signs

and wonders and declares, I will not believe unless I see a token.

Thomas is an instance of this error when he says, Except I see in His hand the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails, I will not believe. His Master bent to his weakness, but He said, and very significant are the words, Thomas, because you have seen Me you have believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed. The chief blessing belongs to you who, whether you have evidences or not, are content to believe your God, taking this Word of God as quite sufficient ground for your confidence without any delights of heart or ecstasies of spiritual visitations! Our God is true even if no wonder is worked and no sign is given. Let us settle this in our hearts and never allow a doubt to intervene. O Holy Spirit, help us in this!

All this together shows that the error of Zacharias was unbelief and his chastisement which he received for it is worthy of our earnest attention. He was chastened for his unbelief because the Lord loved him. His affliction was sent not so much in anger as in love. He had asked for a sign and by a sign was he chastened. God often makes us gather the twigs from which He makes the rod with which He scourges us. Our own sins are the thorns which cause us to smart. Zacharias asked for a sign and he gets this signYou shall be dumb, and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because you believe not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

For months he shall not be able to speak a single word! But while his mouth is closed to others, it shall be open to himselfthat dumb mouth of his shall be preaching to him and saying, You did not believe what was spoken to you of the Lord, and now you are unable to repeat it to others, for the Lord will not employ an unbelieving messenger. If you will not believe when Gods angel speaks, you shall not speak, yourself. Many a dumb Christian, I am afraid, has had his mouth sealed through unbelief. The Lord saves him and gives him much enjoyment, but He denies him utterance because he has such slender faith.

I have no doubt Zacharias was very happy in the prospect of the birth of his child and looked earnestly onward to the day when John, the Prophet of the Highest, should be born, and he should recover speech. But still, it must have been very painful to remain for so long a time in utter silence. How he must have longed to speak or sing! But I have no doubt that many a man is put aside from bearing his testimony through unbelief which he calls diffidence and delicacy. The Lord says, I shall never use you as a preacher. I shall not make use of you in addressing your fellow men. I shall not help you to bring men to Christ in private conversation because you have so little faith. You have doubted Me and now you must be dumb for a season. I hope that, if this is the case with any, your silence will soon end. Lord, open their lips and their mouths shall show forth Your praise!

Dear Friend, I hope the Lord will unloose your tongue by-and-by, for if you are in a right state of heart it will be a very painful thing to you not to be able to declare what the Lord has done for your soul. But it is so with somethey are dumb because they believe not. Moreover, Zacharias had the further affliction of being deaf at the same time. How do I know that he was deaf? That is pretty clear, because when his child was born, it is recorded in the 62nd verse that they made signs to his father how he would have him called. And, of course, if he had been able to hear there would have been no need to use signs. But he could not hear any more than he could speakhe suffered the double affliction of being deaf and dumbno small cross to one who had such gifts of utterance as he showed in his song of praise!

It is remarkable that he could not hear anything, but it is also instructive. I have known Christians who, when they would not believe the promise, have become very deaf, spiritually. You say, What do you mean? How are they deaf? Listen and you will hear them say, I cannot hear Mr. Soand-So. It is the same minister whom they used to hear with pleasure the same manand God blesses him to others as much as before. How is this? Others are drinking in the Word, but these poor deaf people say, We do not know how it is, but we cannot hear our pastor. No, you did not believe and, therefore, you cannot hear. You did not receive his message. You did not rejoice in it and now you cannot hear it.

That is a dreadful sort of deafness! If you suffer from a physical deafness you can buy a horn, or you can go to some skillful aorist who, perhaps, may help you. Moreover, you can read if you cannot hear. But if you get a spiritual deafness, I do not know a worse chastisement that can come upon you, nor one that will make you more mischievous to others. O Beloved, believe the good Word of the Lord! With meekness receive the engrafted Word and do not question it and provoke the Lord, lest, haply, because you did not accept the Word as the Word of God, the time shall come when you will not be able to hear it and your profiting will utterly depart! And the very voice that once was music to you will have no charms at all and the blessed Truth of God which once made your heart leap for joy will cease to have the slightest influence upon you.

Mary was not sentenced either to be silent or to be deaf, for she believed the Word of the Lord which was spoken to her by the angel. O that we, also, by a full obedience of faith may escape the penalties which surely attach themselves to unbelief! We must sorrow, but there can be no reason for increasing it by our own faultand we may readily do so. While on the other hand, faith brings rest and peace. So much concerning Zacharias.

II. Now let us turn our eyes to MARY. Mary used much the same language and yet she spoke not after the same fashion. She asked of the angel, HOW SHALL THIS BE? In looking at her, first, it is to be noticed that she believed what the angel said. It was not How shall I know this? but, in effect, her language was, I believe it. How shall it be? There is no unbelief in the question. Of that we are sure, because not long after she is praised by her intelligent cousin, Elizabeth, who declares that, blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which

were told her from the Lord.

She notably believed. She asked for no sign. She sought no token whatever. The angels voice sufficed her. The still small voice of Divine love within her soul was enough. She believed and only asked to be instructed in the mattershe needed no sign and seal. She was willing, also, to accept all hazards. I would speak with great delicacy, but to the Virgin, remember, it was a very serious thing to be the mother of our Lord. To this very day the base tongues of infidels have dared to insinuate gross criminality against her who was blessed among women! And she must have known that it was not likely that all would believe what she should and many a hard speech would be uttered concerning her.

Indeed, she might have had fear concerning her espoused husband, himself, who would have put her away had not the Lord shielded her. Joseph behaved nobly, like a believer of the first order, and he deserves to be ranked among the truest of the saints as does the Virgin, herself, who well deserves to be exceedingly commended by all who can appreciate pure, delicate and yet heroic faith. Whatever there might be of hazard, so great was the honor that was put upon the Virgin that she does not appear to have felt the slightest hesitation, but said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to your word.

I think her question may be attributed, in part, to surpriseto inevitable amazement! And what we say to the Lord when we are naturally surprised under the greatness of His mercy will not be weighed by Him letter by letter, nor shall we be judged for it, though if very closely examined it might appear like unbelief. The Lord knows His childrens frame and remembers that we are dust. I hope that many a word which drops from the child of God when he is in pain, when he is distressed as Job was on the dunghill, is allowed to blow away with the breath which utters it. How very little did the Lord say to Job about the naughty words which, in his petulance, he had allowed to escape, for, after all, he was grandly patient.

And so, even if there had been something of unbelief in these words of Mary, which there was not, yet they would have been viewed by the Lord as the fruit of surprise at the marvelous and unexpected mercy for which she had not even prayed. There was no unbelief in her language, but there was great wonder, surprise and admiration at so great a gift. How should this come to her? How should she be so highly favored? Her soul seemed to say, Why this to me? That I, so humble and obscurea maiden whose rank and race have been altogether forgottenshould be the mother of the Savior after the flesh, the mother of His humanity by whom humanity is to be redeemed? She was full of wonder and then she began to enquire.

There is the point. She wanted to know how it would be. There was no wrong in that desire. There was no unbelief worthy of rebuke. She believed the surpassing promise and only wished to know how it could be performed. There might readily enough be unbelief in such an enquiry, but not necessarily so. You and I may say, as the Israelites did in the wilderness when God had promised to give them flesh to eat, Shall the flocks and herds be slain? That was unbelievingly asking how it should be. But yet you may ask how a promise shall be fulfilled without any mistrust at all. No, your very faith may raise the enquiry! I know my soul asks again and again many questions of my Lord which He answers to my soul. He would not have answered had they been sinful questions.

We ought to enquire about a great many thingswe should be sacredly inquisitive. We should say, How is it He has chosen us? For our Lord replies, Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. But, still, why me? Why me? You may ask that question, for holy gratitude dictates it. And how is it that He could redeem us with the blood of His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord? And how is it that He renews us? And how will it be that He will perfect us? And how can it be that we shall have a mansion in Heaven and shall become like our Lord? And how is it that we shall be raised up? With what body shall we come? Many a question we may ask, which if not asked in unbelief, will have an answer, or will serve to increase our reverent gratitude.

But now notice, concerning Mary, that while Zacharias was the doubter and was treated as such, Mary was the enquirer and was so dealt with of the Lord. See the difference in the treatment of the two. For first, Mary did not ask for a sign but she got oneand it was one of the most pleasant that could possibly come to her, for it was her cousin Elizabeth! She was to be her sign. Behold, she that had been barren shall come to meet her and comfort her. Brothers and Sisters, the Lord knows how to give you signs if you do not wish for them! And I believe that those have the most tokens for good who do not ask for them but are content to take their Fathers Word without any confirmatory sign.

And then, there was another thing with regard to her. She was graciously instructed. Zacharias asked for a sign and he had it. She asked for instruction and she had it. The angel paused awhile and said to her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you. Therefore, also, that holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God. If you will meekly and believingly ask of your Lord to be taught concerning Divine things, He will give you His Spirit who shall lead you into all Truth and instruct you and make you wise unto salvation.

Now, the conclusion is thisfirst of all, let us not do as Zacharias did. Dear Friend, are you, at this moment, questioning any promise? Are you saying, How shall I know this? Cease from doubting the Infallible Word and rest in the Lord, His Holy Spirit enabling you to believe! On the other hand, are you a seeking sinner and does Christ declare that whoever looks to Him shall be saved, and that whoever believes in Him is not condemned? Do not ask for any sign, but believe Him! He, Himself, is sign enough! He is God and yet Manthe bleeding Lamb, the Sacrifice for sin. Believe Him! Believe Him! Believe Him and you shall have the blessing!

And you, dear child of God, if you have a text of Scripture, a promise which evidently suits your casewhich meets your troubledo not say, How shall I know this? When the Spirit says it, it is enough that it is in the Word. Whatever the Scripture states, be sure of it, for if all the wise

men in the world were to prove it, it would not be proven one bit more! And if they were all to

disprove it, it would be none the less sure! If I were to see a thing to be true which God had declared in His Word, I would not believe my eyes so well as I would believe His Wordat least, I ought not to do so. This is where we ought to standall the world may deceive, but God cannot! Let God be true and every man a liar.

If you will come and trust Him in this way you shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. Your leaf shall not wither and you shall not know when drought comes. If your walk through life is the walk of faith, as Abrahams and Enochs were, you shall have a grand lifegrandly full, eternal and Christlybut if you doubt Him you shall not be established. The unbeliever shall be as the rolling thing before the whirlwind, as the sear leaf that falls from the tree and as the heath of the desert that knows not when good comes. May the Holy Spirit save us, Brothers and Sisters, from unbelief, and give us rest in the promise of God!

And now, secondly, let us with all our hearts imitate Mary in being enquirersoften asking, desiring to know and looking deep and searching for into the promises of God we cannot look too closely, since these things the angels desire to look into. You ought to realize the promise as to be sure that it means what it says and then you will naturally begin to ask how it will come to pass. Only strive to keep out all unbelief from your enquiry and say, I know in my heart how it can be, for nothing is impossible with God.

There is our answer to all questionsWith God all things are possible. If I enquire, How can He deliver me? Nothing is impossible with God. How can He keep me to the end? Nothing is impossible with God. How can He preserve me amid persecution? How can He keep me from temptation and preserve me from the world, the flesh and the devil? Nothing is impossible with God! Fling yourself upon Omnipotence and you shall be strong! May the Holy Spirit help you to do this for Christs sake. Amen.

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THE JUDGMENT UPON ZACHARIAS   
NO. 3495

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 1916.   
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**You shall be dumb and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because you believe not My words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.   
Luke 1:20.**

UNBELIEF is everywhere a great sin and a grievous mistake. Unbelief has proved the ruin of those countless multitudes who, having heard the Gospel, rejected it, died in their sins and have been consigned to the place of tormentand await the fiercer judgment of The Last Day. I might ask the question concerning this innumerable host, Who slew all these? The answer would be, Unbelief. And when unbelief comes into the Christians heart, as it does at timesfor the truest Believer has his times of doubteven Abraham, the father of the faithful, sometimes had his misgivings! That unbelief does not assail his thoughts without withering his joys and impairing his energies. There is nothing in the world that costs a saint so dearly as doubt. If he disbelieve his God, he most assuredly robs himself of comfort, deprives himself of strength, and does himself a real injury. The case of Zacharias may be a lesson to the Lords people. It is to them I am going to speak. Zacharias is a striking example of the ills a good man may have to suffer as the result of his unbelief. In reviewing these, we mark

I. THE CHARACTER AND POSITION OF ZACHARIAS.   
Here we cannot fail to discover some profitable lesson. He was undoubtedly a Believer. He is said, in the sixth verse, to have been righteous before God. No man ever obtained such a reputation except by faith. The just shall live by faith. No other righteousness than that which is faith is of any esteem in Gods account. Such was the righteousness of Abraham and such was the righteousness of all the saints before the advent of our Redeemer. Such, too, has been the standard ever since. Zacharias evidently was a real Believer. Yet for all that, when the angel appeared to him, and God gave him the promise of a son, he was amazed, bewildered, incredulous and could not credit, but only question the announcement. How shall I know that these things shall be?   
Nor was he merely a genuine Believer. He was well instructed and greatly enlightened, for he was a priest, and, as a priest, he was considered righteous before God, and blameless, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. That he was well instructed in the Word of God is undeniable. He could not otherwise have discharged his duty, for the priests lips must keep knowledge and he must teach men. Being proficient in the one, and competent for the other, ignorance offered him no excuse. Moreover, as a man of years, he was probably to be classed among the experienced saints of his time. He had borne the burden and heat of the day and received proof upon proof of the abundant mercy of God. Now mark this. For any of us to doubt, who have been justified by faith is a shameful delinquency. For those to doubt who have, in addition to their first convictions, a thousand confirmations of the Truths of God they have embraced, who are acquainted with the Covenant and its rich inventory of promises, who are deeply taught in the things of Godfor such to doubt involves a higher degree of guilt! I do not think that had Zacharias been a mere babe in Grace, or an inexperienced stripling, his unbelief would have met with so stern a rebuke. It was because he was a venerable priest, one thoroughly schooled in sacred Truth, a man who for many years instructed the people of Israel in the oracles of God, that it became a crying evil for him to say, How shall I know this? when the angel told him of his prayer being heard, and of the manner of answer the Lord would vouchsafe him.   
The high office that Zacharias held as a priest caused him to be looked up to. Hence his conduct was more narrowly watched and his example had a wider influence. On a similar account we have need, all of us in our several spheres, to consider the effect of our actions upon others. The higher a mans position, the greater his responsibilityand in the event of any delinquency, the graver his offense. For you to disbelieve, my dear Brother, who is at the head of a household, is worse than a personal infirmityit is a violation of duty to your family. And you, dear Friend, who preach the Gospel, for you to disbelieve, who are looked upon by many as an advanced Christian, as a mature saint whose example may be safely followed by those who listen to your counselsthis is a great and a crying evil, whereby you dishonor the Lord. I pray God that your conscience may be tenderly sensitive and that you may be awakened to a sense of the dishonor you bring to Him by your faithlessness.   
How peculiarly favored Zacharias was! An angel of the Lord appeared unto him. Not to any of the other priests, when they were offering incense, did such a heavenly visitor come. And what welcome tidings he brought! It was a wonderful message that he was to be the father of a child great in the sight of the Lord, one who should minister in the spirit and power of Elijah, and become the forerunner of the Messiah! This surely was a signal instance of Divine Favor. And mark this, Beloved, our God is very jealous of those whom He highly favors. You cannot have privileged communications from the Lord, or be admitted into close communion with Him, without finding that He is a jealous God. The nearer we draw to Him, the more hallowed our sense of His Presence will be. But to doubt His Word, or question the fulfillment of His promise when He speaks kindly to us, must incur His censure. I speak after the manner of menwe do not expect from a stranger the esteem which we ought to merit from our servants. But our friends, who know us better than servants, ought to trust us more implicitly. And yet beyond common friendship in the near relation and tender attachment of a wife to her husband, the most unqualified confidence should be reposed. Even so, my Brothers and Sisters, if you and I have ever been permitted to lean our heads on Jesus bosom, if we have sat down at His banquets and His banner over us has been love, if we have been separated from the world by peculiar fellowship with Christ and have had choice promises given us, we cannot, like Zacharias, ask, How shall I know, without grieving the Holy Spirit of God and bringing upon ourselves some sad chastisement as the result!   
What soothing comfort had just been administered to Zacharias by the angel of the Lord! Was not the manner of the salutation fitted to allay terror and inspire him with trust? The troubled thoughts that perplexed him and the fear that fell upon him when the angel appeared standing at the right hand of the altar, met with no rebuke. If it was natural that so unknown a vision should startle him, there was a gentle sympathizing tenderness in the angels address that might well have stilled the throbbing of his heart! Fear not, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard. And so is it with us when the consolations of God have been neither few nor small, and when His good will towards us has been pointedly expresseddoes it not make doubt and questioning more inexcusable? Do we not thereby aggravate the sin? Some of us have lived in the very bosom of comfort. Precious promises have been brought home to our souls. We have eaten of the marrow and the fatness, we have drunk the wines on the lees well refined. We are no strangers to the blessing of His eternal and unchanging love, or to the light of His Countenance, which they prove who find Grace in His eyes. Oh, if we begin to doubt after these discriminating love tokens, what apology can we offer? How can we hope to escape from the chastening rod?   
Moreover, the misgivings that Zacharias betrayed relate to the very subject on which his supplications were offered. It was in response to his own petition that the angel said to him, Your prayer is heard. I marvel at his faith that he should persevere in prayer for a blessing which seemed, at his own and his wifes age, to have been out of the course of nature and beyond the domain of hope! But I marvel a great deal more that when the answer came to

that very prayer, Zacharias could not believe it! So full often is it with usnothing would surprise some of us more than to receive an answer to some of our prayers! Though we believe in the efficacy of prayer, at times we believe so feebly that when the answer comes, as come it does, we are astounded and filled with amazement! We can scarcely think of it as a purpose of Godit seems rather to us like a happy coincidence. Surely this adds greatly to the sin of unbelief! If we have been asking for mercy without expecting it, and pleading promises while harboring mistrust, every prayer we have offered has been only a repetition of our secret unbeliefand it is only Gods faithfulness that brings our inconsistency to light!   
One other reflection is suggested by the narrative. Zacharias appears to have staggered at a promise which others, whom we might well imagine to have been weaker in faith then himself, implicitly believed. The veteran falters where a babe in Grace might have taken courage! And is it not always a scandal if any of us who have been conspicuously favored of God are ready to halt, while our feebler Brothers and Sisters are animated and encouraged? No dubious thought seems to have crossed the mind of Elizabeth, no incredulous expression fell from her lips. She said, Thus has the Lord dealt with me.   
This case was the very opposite of that of Abraham and Sarah. There Abraham believed, but Sarah doubtedhere the wife believes in the face of her husbands scruples. In like manner, Mary, that humble village maiden, accepts with simple faith the high and holy salutation with which she was greeted. She just asks a natural question, and that being answered, she replies, Be it unto me according to your Word. Her surprise was soon exchanged for joy and, by-and-by, she begins to sing with a loud voice, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. Not a little remarkable is this opening Chapter of the Gospel according to Luke! Woman, who had been in the background through long preceding generations, seems suddenly to take a foremost place! Zacharias and Joseph stand in doubt, while Elizabeth and Mary exultingly believe. And who knows but I may be addressing some poor woman here who, in the depth of affliction, bodily suffering and poverty, nevertheless rejoices in God with all her heart? But without a doubt, I am now speaking to many a man who is vexed with trifling cares, murmurs bitterly because of petty annoyances and distrusts his God when clouds come over the sky so that he sees not his way. Shame on our unbelief! Think shame of yourselves because of it, I pray you. Never does it disgrace us more than when the weaklings of the Lords family put us to the blush by the simplicity and sincerity of their faith. The character and position of Zacharias may furnish a striking moral, but I do urgently entreat each Christian to point the keen edge of criticism at himself and consider how much he is personally to blame for his own unbelief. Let us now proceed to investigate   
II. THE FAULT OF ZACHARIAS.  
Why this perilous wavering at that privileged hour? His fault was that he looked at the difficulty. I am an old man, he said, and my wife is well stricken in years. And while he looked at the difficulty, he would gladly suggest a remedyhe wanted a sign! How shall I know this? It was not enough for him that God had said sohe needed some collateral evidence to guarantee the truth of the Word of the Lord! This is a very common fault among really good people. They look for a sign. I have often trembled in my own soul when I have felt an inclination thus to tempt the Lord by looking for some minute circumstance to verify a magnificent promise. When I have thought, Hereby shall I know whether He does hear prayer or not, a cold shiver has passed over methe shudder has gone through my soul that ever I should think of challenging the truth of Gods Wordwhen the fact is so certain! To us who have full often cried unto the Lord in our distresses and been delivered out of our troubles, to raise such a question is indeed ungrateful. For a child of God who habitually prays to his Father in Heaven, to look upon His faithfulness as a matter of uncertainty is to degrade himself and to dishonor his Lord! Yet there is no denying the tendency and disposition among us to want a sign. As we read a prophecy of the future, we crave a token in the present. If the Lord were pleased to give us a sign, or if He told us to ask for a sign, we would be quite right in attaching a high importance thereto, but for us to doubt a plain promise and, therefore, ask for a sign, is to sin against the Lord! Sometimes we have wanted signs in spiritual things. Meet and proper is it for us to rejoice in the true delights of fellowship with Christ, but it ill becomes us to make our feelings a kind of test of our acceptance, or to say, I will not believe God if He does not indulge me with certain manifestations of Graceunless He gives me the sweetmeats I crave, I will be sulky and sullen, and refuse to eat the childrens bread. Why, such conduct is willful and wicked! It is weak and utterly inexcusable! Yet how many of us have been guilty of this folly? Now, as Zacharias stood upon the threshold of the Gospel dispensation, and he was the first among those who heard the glad tidings to express unbelief, it was necessary that he should be made an example of.   
God would show at the very outset, even before John the Baptist was born, that unbelief could not be tolerated nor should it go unchastened. Therefore, His servant Zacharias, must, as soon as he had asked for a sign, have such a sign as would make him suffer for months to come constrain him to be sorry that he had ever dared to proffer the request! Oh, Beloved, is our faith still so weak, and our experience still so contracted, that we cannot yet trust our God? Twenty years have we known Him. Has He been a wilderness to us? Have His mercy and truth ever failed us in time of need? Shall all His tender dealings with us count for nothing? Do you think so lightly of the gift of His Son, the gift of the Holy Spirit, of the dally Providence which has guarded you, and of the hourly benediction which has been vouchsafed to you, that you would gladly put aside these unfailing benefits from your grateful remembrance while you indulge in some paltry whim and tempt the Lord your God by your mistrust? That be far from any of us! We would rather take up the position of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who, when arraigned before Nebuchadnezzar, and adjudged to be thrown into the furnace of fire, said, Our God is able to deliver us. But, they added, if not (though He should do nothing of the kind), nevertheless be it known unto you, O King, we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up. That is the spirit in which we ought to walk before GodThough He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.   
What if He does not spare my mothers precious life? What if He does not preserve my child from the ravages of the fatal epidemic? What if He takes away the desire of my eyes with a stroke? What if my business should cease to thrive? What if my health fails and my strength decays? What if I am dishonored by the scandal of my neighbors? Shall I, therefore, cast off my allegiance to God, or betray my trust in Him? Am I to engage in rebellion like this? Not flood nor flame could quench or extinguish His love to me! Shall anxiety or tribulation, disappointment or disaster sever my heart from devotion to Him? No, God give me Grace to see my cattle destroyed, and my goods swept away, and my children cut off in their prime, and to hear cruel taunts from the wife of my bosomto be covered with sore boils and to sit on a dunghill and scrape myself with a potsherd and find my best friends miserable comfortersand yet, in the midst of accumulated distresses, to be able to say, I know that my Redeemer lives! He has not failed to deliver me up to now, and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God! Though the fig tree should not blossom, though the flocks and herds are cut off, yet will I trust in the Lord and glory in the God of my salvation. If true to our high profession, the Christians faith should not borrow its hue from the circumstances by which he is surrounded. To hanker after signs that a promise shall be fulfilled is obviously to show distrust of the Promiser. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. So shall you be restrained from asking for a petty sign to justify you in relying on His princely bounty. The Lord keep you from this great transgression! We pass on to observe   
III. THE PENALTY ZACHARIAS INCURRED.   
His morbid propensity was followed by a mortifying punishment. He had doubted and he became dumband as the narrative clearly shows us, he was likewise deaf. Such was his chastisement, but it was not sent in angerbut in Gods own Covenant Love. What a salutary medicine! Although bitter to the taste, how effective it was! Read his song and you will see the evidence. He had been silent for monthsquiet, shut out from all sound, and unable to make any. But well he had occupied his months of seclusion. He had searched the Prophetsdo you see that? He had been musing much upon the Coming Onedo you see that? Deep humility had taken the place of arrogant presumption. He was bowed down before the Majesty of God, yet at the same time full of peace and blissful hope! Thus he looked into the glorious future. Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you are prone to doubt, this sickness of the mind will require a strong corrective! Very likely God will give you some sharp medicine, but it shall work for your good. As His child, He will not chasten you so as to injure you, but He will chasten you so as to benefit you. I do not think children generally court the rod, however beneficial it may be, and yet I am quite sure there is no wise child of God who would not shrink from the graver ills which render such discipline essential to his souls health.

See how judgment was tempered with mercy. The punishment sent to Zacharias was not so severe as it might have been. Instead of being struck deaf and dumb, he might have been struck dead! As I read this passage, I wondered that God has not struck me deaf and dumb when I have spoken unbelieving wordswhen I have been depressed in spirit and spoken unadvisedly with my lips. Oh, had the Lord been angry with me, and said, If that is your witness about Me, you shall never speak again. That would have been most just and I might have been a mournful instance of His indignation against His unbelieving servants! He has not dealt so with meglory be to His name!   
And this chastisement did not invalidate the promise. The Lord did not say, Well, Zacharias, as you dont believe it, your wife, Elizabeth, shall not have a son. There shall be a John born, but he shall not come to your house. Oh, no, that is a grand passageIf we believe not, yet He abides faithful; He cannot deny Himself. The promise still stands. God does not take advantage of our unbelief to cry off and say, I will give you no blessings because you doubt Meno, but having said it, He does it and His Word does not return unto Him void! Even the trembling, doubting children, though they get the rod, get the blessing, tooand the promise is fulfilled, though the father is dumb when the blessing comes. Very painful, indeed, was his chastisement. One would not like to be deaf and dumb for a daybut to be deaf and dumb for the space of nine months must have been a very painful trial to this man. Moreover, he could not bless the people! He could not speak a word. He could not instruct the peoplehe was useless for that part of the priests workand when the song went up within the hallowed walls of the Temple, he could not hear it. He might know by signs that they were singing a hallelujah, yet his ears could not catch its grateful strains! That poor tongue of his was silent. He could not add a note to the volume of praise that went up to the God he loved! It must have been mournful to him to have no prayer in the family which he could hear, and in which he could join and to be as good as dead for all practical purposes. Now I am afraid there are many Believers who have had to suffer something like this, for many days, on account of their unbelief. I think I can point out some who are unable to hear the Gospel as they once did many years ago. A friend said that he could not hear me preach. I said to him, Buy a horn. No, he said, it is not your voiceI can hear that, but I dont enjoy it. My reply was, Perhaps that is my fault, but I am far from sure that it is not your own. I fear, in such cases, it is quite as often the hearers fault as the preachers fault. At any rate, when others profit and our judgment approves, though our hearts find no refreshment, there is reason to suspect that in the dullness of our senses we are compelled to bear chastisement for our unbelief. You go where others go and find no solace. You hear what edifies and comforts them, but there is no cheer for you. You are deafyour ears are closed to what the Lord says. Very often it has happened, I fear, to some here, that, for lack of faith, they have lost their speech. Time was when they could tell of the Lords goodness, but they seem silent now. They could sing once, but now their harps are hung on the willows. As they get with their companions, they seem as if they have lost all their pleasant conversation. If they try the old accustomed strings of the time-worn harp, the ancient skill is gone. They cannot praise God as once they didand all because on one occasion, when the promise was clear before their eyes, they challenged and mistrusted it! They could not rely upon their God! Little do we know how many Fatherly chastisements come upon us as the result of our unbelief.   
The lessons I gather, and with which I conclude, are theseFirst, if any of you, Beloved, are weak in faith, do not be satisfied about it. Cry to God! Our God deserves better homage of us than a weak, small faith can render Him. He deserves to be trusted with such confidence as a child gives his parent. Ask Him to increase your faith. And you who have faith, oh, keep it jealously, exercise it habituallypray to the Lord to preserve it! Never begin to walk according to the sight of the eyes. Confer not with flesh and blood. Dont come down from that blessed height of simple confidence in God, but ask that you may live there and no longer doubt. The Church needs Believers to believe for her, and to pray for her. He that wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. Are you strong in faith? Be you stronger still! Are you weak in faith? Be you strong!   
But let the unbeliever, the utter unbeliever, tremble! If a good man, a saved man, a noble and a blameless man was, nevertheless, for months struck dumb for unbelief, what will become of you who have no faith at all? He who believes not is condemned already because he has not believed on the Son of God! To you, unbeliever, no angel Gabriel will appear, but the Destroying Angel awaits you! What shall be your fearful chastisement? You will be silentit will be eternal. Oh, you shall stand silent at the Judgment Seat of Christ, unable to offer any excuse for your rebellion and unbelief! Unbelief will destroy the best of usfaith will save the worst of us! He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has eternal lifehe that believes not (whatever else his apparent excellences) will assuredly perish! Faith, faith! This is the priceless saving thing to everyone of us. The gift is yours to believe. The Grace is yours to inherit the righteousness of faith. The joy is yours to believe in Jesus Christ with all your hearts. The triumph is yours to believe now to the saving of your souls! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **HEBREWS 3; 4:1-9.**

**HEBREWS 3.**   
Verse 1. Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Would God we considered Him more! He is supremely worthy of our perpetual consideration from all points of view. And the more you consider Him, the more you may, for there is a depth and breadth about His wondrous Personality, His work and His offices well worthy of our deepest thought and admiring worship! Holy Brothers and Sisters, partakers of a heavenly callingwe may well consider Him.

2-4. Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house. For this Man was counted worthy of more glory than Mosses, inasmuch as He who has built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by some man; but He that built all things is God. The translators were obliged to supply the word, Man, and yet it is not correct. It is only half the matterfor behold, Christ is God and Man in one ever blessed Person and, therefore, was He counted worthy of more glory than Moses.

5, 6. And Moses verily was faithful in all His house, as a servant, for testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ, as a Son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. We are the house in which He dwells with delightin which He finds comfort and rest! We are the household over which He rules and in which He is the delight and the joy of us all. Oh, may our Church always be such a house, so well ordered, that when the Lord comes into itno, whenever He dwells in itHe may not be grieved in His own house! Whatever trouble a man has, he hopes to find solace at home. And so let the House of God be the House of Jesusthe place where there is peace, obedience, love, holiness!

7-9. Therefore (as the Holy Spirit says, today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted Me, tried Me and saw My works forty years. That was a house in which it was hard to dwell. It had been Moses prayer, if Your Presence go not with us, carry us not up from here. And the curtains had been spread for Gods abode and there was the Holy Place. But, oh, their provocations made it an uneasy house for the Lord of the house, which ultimately He left, tearing its veil from the top to the bottom as He left it, for it was finished and He had done with it!

10. Therefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known My ways. They do err they did always err in their heart. God is very tender to errors of judgmenterrors of the head. But to err in the heartthis is the heart of erring and very provoking to the Most High. And for it always to be so after having tasted the bitter fruit of erringafter having known Gods anger on account of previous errorsoh, this was sad! They do always err in their heart. The foundation of sin often lies, however, in ignorance They have not known My ways. Ignorance can never be of any benefit to us. That the soul be without knowledge is not good. But ignorance of God is the constant course of the errors of the heart! All your children shall be taught of the Lord, is a very gracious promise, and where it is carried out, the errors are rectified by the Grace of God!

11. So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter into my rest). What a dreadful warning this is to us! If God has had 40 years patience with you, take heed, Sinner, take heed, lest He swear in His wrath that you shall not enter into His rest, for your entrance into that rest depends upon His good will and pleasureHe will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion! If, then, you provoke Him to swear that you shall not enter into His rest, into that rest you never can enter, for then the gates of Hell are opened for you and the gates of Heaven fast locked against you! Beware, then, lest you provoke Him.

12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. That is the thing that provokes Godunbeliefnot so much the unbelief of the head, as the unbelief of the heart, when the heart will not yield to the plan of salvation, when men want to be saved by their own works, or else are indifferent altogether about whether they are saved or not! It is heart-unbelief that damns men! It is heart-faith that is the means of salvation! With the heart man believes unto righteousness, but heart-unbelief leads to and seals his ruin!

13. But exhort one another daily. In opposition to your always erring, always be exhortingand you cannot do that with any face unless you are always watching that you do not err, yourselves! But when walking near to God, you exhort one another, it is well. Exhort one another daily.

13. While it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. If sin were to come to us labeled as sin, I trust we would reject it. But there is a deceitfulness of sin. It sometimes comes as a necessary action. We think that wisdom demands that we should sin a little, sometimes, to avoid some great eviland in this way the soul gets hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Oh, if the devil would come in the shape of a devil, he would do little mischief, but he assumes the fashion of an angel of lightand there it is that he causes us so much sin and sorrow.

14. For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. It is not true that one act of faith is all that is requiredunless you will consider that one act to be continuous throughout life. If a man were once a Believer, and if it were possible to cease to be so, then, of course, he is ruined. But the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints speaks not on that wise, but it says that he who is a Believer shall continue sothat he who is right with God shall abide so even to the endand unless it is so, we are not partakers of Christ at all! We are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

15, 16. While it is said, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke. There are many such and there are no sinners who provoke God so much as those who hear the Gospel! A man who never hears the Gospel at all may provoke God, but the man that sins after he has heard it again and again, and againand has the sound of it ringing in his ears provokes God with a sevenfold degree of provocation!

16. Indeed was it not all that came out of Egypt with Moses? No, only two. Yes, but the Lord will not forget two. There were only a fewa mere handfulin Sodom, but the Lord would not consume them with the wicked. They were brought out of it. And so here, if there are only two, the Holy Spirit takes care to be very accurate in the counting of Gods elect ones and He says, Indeed, was it not all that came out of Egypt with Moses? If you are one of a family, and two of a city, He will take you and bring you into Zion. You may be in so great a minority that in all your acquaintances there may not be one godly personyet the Holy Spirit will not take the matter in the lump, but He will choose you outand mark you out and distinguish you. Do you not notice how careful He was when He spoke about Judasthe good Judas? He says, Not Iscariot. No, no! He will not have him mistaken for that traitor! He guards the names of His people, each one of them, if there is but oneor two, if there are but two. Indeed was it not all that came out of Egypt with Moses? God has an election according to Grace. Doubtless there are some here now who will no longer provoke God, but who, constrained by Sovereign Love, will throw down all the weapons of their rebellion and yield themselves up to Him! May it be your case. May it be your case, Sinner, even at this moment!

17. But with whom was He grieved forty years; was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? How He speaks of them and calls them carcasses ! He never speaks of His children so! And you remember that in the Old Testament the unredeemed man is comparable to the ass. You shall not redeem him; you shall break his neck. But the redeemed man is comparable to the sheep. Valuable property is in him, and God esteems him. Whose carcasses fell in the wilderness.

18, 19. And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. It is those who believe not who have Gods curse! If you do not rest upon Christ as Your salvation, you, too, shall hear God swear that you shall not enter into His rest!

**HEBREWS 4.**   
1. Let us therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. If you avoid the very seeming of it, you will avoid the thing, itself. Oh, that we were careful about thisthat there was nothing that should give any reasonable fear to those who observed us, or to ourselves when we search our hearts, lest we should not enter into this rest!

2. For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. It must be mixed with faith. There are many drugs that are of no value till they are mixed with something elseand the Word of God preached becomes of no value to a soul until it is mixed with faith in them that hear it.

3. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

I leave out the intermediate words for the time being. There is a rest. 9. There remains therefore a rest to the people of God.   
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 #1760 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

HE SHALL BE GREAT   
NO. 1760

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 2, 1883, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Being his last sermon before his journey to the South of France. He shall be great.   
Luke 1:32.**

Strictly speaking, I suppose these words refer to the human Nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is as to His humanity that Christ was born of Mary. The context runs thusBehold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call His name JESUS. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end. The angel of the Lord thus spoke concerning the Manhood of that Holy Thing that should be born of the favored virgin by the overshadowing of the power of the Highest.

As to His Divinity, we must speak concerning Him in another style than this. But, as a Man, He was born of the virgin and it was said to her before His birth, He shall be great. The Man, Christ Jesus, stooped very low. In His first estate He was not great; He was very little when He was upon His mothers breast. In His later estate He was not great, but despised, rejected and crucified! Indeed, He was so poor that He had nowhere to lay His head and He was so cast out by the tongues of men that they called Him a fellow, mentioned Him among drunken men and winebibbersand even accused Him of having a devil and being mad! In the esteem of the great ones of the earth, He was an ignorant Galilean of whom they said, We know not where He is.

His life binds up more fitly with the lowly annals of the poor than with the aristocracy or whatever stood for that in Caesars day. In His own time His enemies could not find a word base enough to express their contempt of Him. He was brought very low in His trial, condemnation and suffering. Who thought Him great when He was covered with bloody sweat, or when He was sold at the price of a slave, or when a guard came out against Him with swords, lanterns and torches, as if He had been a thief? Who thought Him great when they bound Him and led Him to the judgment seat as a malefactor? Or when the cowards smote Him, blindfolded Him and spat in His face? Or when He was scourged, led through the streets bearing His Cross and afterwards hung up between two thieves to die?

Truly He was brought very low and a sword pierced through His mothers heart as she saw the sufferings of her holy Son. When she knew that He was dead and buried in a borrowed tomb, she must have painfully pondered in her heart the words from Heaven concerning Him and thought within herself, The angel said He would be great, but who is made so vile as He? He said that He should be called the Son of the Highest, but, lo, He is brought into the dust of death and men seal His sepulcher and cast out His name as evil.

Still, while I think that our text most fitly applies to the manhood of Christ in the first place, I rejoice to think that   
*He who on earth as Man was known,   
And bore our sins and pains,   
Now, seated on the eternal throne,   
The God of Glory reigns.*

The very Man who was despised and spat upon, now sits glorious on His Fathers Throne! As Man, He is anointed, King of kings, and Lord of lords. As man, He has been lifted up from the lowest depths and set in the greatest heights to reign forever and ever! Peter and the Apostles testified, This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses, He being by the right hand of God exalted. Stephen also said, Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. While we believe that and rejoice in it, we shall be wise never to dissociate the Deity of Christ from His Humanity, for they make up one Person.

I cannot help remarking that in the New Testament you find a disregard of all rigid distinction of the two Natures in the Person of our Lord when the Spirit speaks concerning Him. The two Natures are so thoroughly united in the Person of Christ that the Holy Spirit does not speak of the Lord Jesus with theological exactness, like one who writes a creed, but He speaks as to men of understanding who know and rejoice in the Truth of the one indivisible Person of the Mediator. For instance, we read in Scripture of the blood of GodPaul says in Acts 20:28, Feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood.

Now, strictly speaking, there can be no blood of God, and the expression looks like a confusion of the two Natures. But this is intentional that we may clearly see that the two Natures are so joined together that the Holy Spirit does not stop to dissect and set out differences. He says of the united Person of our blessed Lord that which is strictly true either of His Humanity or of His Deity. He is called both, God, our Savior, and, the Man, Christ Jesus. The combined Natures of the Man, the God, Christ Jesus our Lord, are one Personand all the acts of either Nature may be ascribed to that one Person. Therefore I, for one, do not hesitate to sing such verses as these

*He that distributes crowns and thrones,   
Hangs on a tree and bleeds and groans!   
The Prince of Life resigns His breath;   
The King of Glory bows to death.   
Well might the sun in darkness hide,   
And shut his glories in,   
When God, the mighty Maker, died   
For man, the creatures sin!   
See how the patient Jesus stands,   
Insulted in His lowest case!*

*Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,   
And spit in their Creators face.*   
We shall not labor, therefore, to preserve the niceties of theology, but we shall, at this time, freely speak of our Lord as He is in His Godhead and in His Manhoodand apply our text to the whole Christdeclaring the Divine promise that He shall be great.

While my Brother was praying for me, I was wishing that I had the tongues of men and of angels with which to set forth my theme tonight, and yet I shall retract my wish, for the subject is such that if my words were the most common that could be foundyes, if they were ungrammatical and if they were put together in a most uncouth manner, it would little matterfor failure awaits me in any case! The subject far transcends all utterance! Jesus is such a One that no oratory can ever reach the height of His Glory and the simplest words are best suited to a Subject so sublime. Fine words would be but tawdry things to hang beside the unspeakably glorious Lord! I can say no more than that He is great! If I could tell forth His greatness with choral symphonies of cherubim, yet would I fail to reach the height of this great argument!

I will be content if I can touch the hem of the garment of His greatness. If the Lord will but set us in a cleft of the rock and only make us see the back parts of His Character, we shall be overcome by the vision! As yet, even of Jesus, the face of His full Glory cannot be seen, or if seen, it cannot be described. Were we caught up to the third Heaven, we should have little to say on coming back, for we would have seen things which were not lawful for us to utter. I shall not, therefore, fail with loss of honor if I tell you that my utmost success at this time will but touch the fringe of the splendor of the Son of Man. This is not the time of His clearest revealing. The day is coming for the manifestation of the Lordas yet He shines not forth among men in His noontide!

His Second Advent shall more fully reveal Him. Then shall His people shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father because He, also, shall rise in the clear face of Heaven as the Sun of Righteousness, greatly blessing the sons of men.

I. Let me touch my theme as best I can by, first of all, saying of our adorable Lord Jesus that HE IS GREAT FROM MANY POINTS OF VIEW. I might have said from every point of view, but that is too large a Truth of God to be surveyed at one sitting. Mind would fail us; life would fail us; time would fail usonly eternity and perfection will suffice for that boundless meditation! But from the points of view to which I would conduct you for a moment, the Lord Jesus Christ is emphatically great!

First, in the perfection of His Nature. Think, my Brothers and Sisters. There was never such a Being as our Well-Beloved! He is peerless and incomparable. He is Divine and, therefore, unique. He is Light of light, very God of very God. Jesus is truly equal with God, One with the Father! Oh, the greatness of the Godhead! Jehovah is an Infinite Being immeasurable, incomprehensible, inconceivable! He fills all things and yet is not contained by all things. He is, indeed, great beyond any idea of greatness that has ever dawned upon us. All this is true of the OnlyBegotten. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning which were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.

For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen. He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. But our Lord Jesus is also Man and this makes the singularity of His Person, that He should be perfectly and purely God, and as truly and really Man! He is not humanity Deified. He is not Godhead humanized. I have admitted latitude of expression, but there is, in fact, no confusion of the substance. He is God. He is Man. He is all that God is and all that man is as God created him. He is as truly God as if He were not man, and yet as completely and perfectly Man as if He were not God! Think of this wondrous combination! A perfect Manhood without spot or stain of original or actual sinand then the glorious Godhead combined with it! Said I not truly that Jesus stands alone?

He is not greatest of the great, but great where all else are little! He is not something among all, but all where all else are nothing! Who shall be compared with Him? He counts it not robbery to be equal with God. And among men He is the Firstborn of every creature. Among the risen ones He is the Firstborn by His Resurrection from the dead. Among the glorified He is the Source and Object of glory! I cannot compass His Naturewho shall declare His generation? He is one with us and yet inconceivably beyond us. Our nature is limited, sinful, fallen. His Nature is unbounded, holy, Divine. When Jehovah looks on us, we ask, What is man, that you are mindful of him? And the son of man, that you visit him? But, when He brings in the First-Begotten into the world, He says, And let all the angels of God worship Him. Shall it not truly be said as to His Nature, He is great?

He is great, also, in the grandeur of His offices. Remember that He has, for our sakes, undertaken to be our Redeemer. You see your bondage, Brothers and Sisters. You know it, for some of you have worn the fetters till they have entered into your soulfrom such slavery He came to redeem us! Behold His Zion in ruins, heaps on heaps, smoking, consumed! He comes to rebuild and to restore! This is His officeto build up the old wastes and to restore the Temple of the living God which had been cast down by the foe. To accomplish this, He came to be our Priest, our Prophet and our King. In each office He is glorious beyond compare! He came to be our Savior, our Sacrifice, our Substitute, our Surety, our Head, our Friend, our Lord, our Life, our All!

Pile up the offices and remember that each one is worthy of God. Mention them as you may, and truly you shall never remember them all, for He, the express image of His Fathers Glory, has undertaken every kind of office that He might perfectly redeem His people and make them to be His own forever! In each office He has gained the summit of Glory and therein He is and shall be great! Have you ever stood in Westminster Abbey when some great warrior was being buried and when the herald pronounced his various titles? He has been greatly honored by his queen and his nation, for which he has fought so valiantly. He is prince of this and duke of that, and count of the other, and earl of something elsethe titles are many and brilliant. What a parade it is! Vanity of vanities! All is vanity! What matters it, to the senseless clay, that it is buried with pomp of heraldry?

But I stand at the tomb of Christ and I say of His offices that they are superlatively grand! And, moreover, that they are not buried and neither is He among the dead! He lives and still bears His honors in the fullness of their splendor! He is still all to His peopleevery office He still carries on and will carry on till He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Fatherand God shall be All in All. Oh, the splendor of this Christ of God in the mighty offices which He sustains! He is the Standard-Bearer among ten thousand! Who is like HE in all eternity? The government shall be upon His shoulders and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!

Let our hearts give Him our adoring praise tonight, for He is great in the glorious offices which God has heaped upon Him. His Nature and His offices would, alone, furnish us with a lengthened theme, but oh, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus is great in the splendor of His achievements. He does not wear an office whose duty is neglectedHis name is faithful and true. He is no holder of a lieHe claims to have finished the work which His Father gave Him to do. He has undertaken great things and, glory be to His name, He has achieved them! His peoples sins were laid upon Him and He bore them up to the Cross and on the Cross He made an end of themthat they will never be mentioned against them any more forever!

Then He went down into the grave and slept there for a little season. But He tore away the bars of the sepulcher and left Death dead at His feet, bringing life and immortality to light by His Resurrection! This was His high calling and He has fulfilled it! His victory is complete! The defeat of the foe is perfect. O Death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? Springing upward from the tomb when the appointed day was come, He opened Heavens gates to all Believers, according to the Word of GodThe breaker is come up before them, and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them. As He opened the golden gates, He led captivity captive and, receiving gifts for men, He cast down a royal largess among the poorest of His people that they might be enriched. This was His objective and the design has been carried out without flaw or failure!

Within the veil He went, our Representative, to take possession of our crowns and thrones, which He holds for us to this day by the tenure of His own Cross. Having purchased the inheritance and paid off the heavy mortgage that lay upon it, He has taken possession of the Canaan wherein our souls shall dwell at the end of the days when we shall stand in our lot. Is it not proven that He is great? Conquerors are great and He is the greatest of them! Deliverers are great and He is the greatest of them! Liberators are great and He is the greatest of them! Saviors are great and He is the greatest of them! They that multiply the joys of men are truly greatand what shall I say of Him who has bestowed everlasting joy upon His people and entailed it upon them by a Covenant of salt forever and ever? Well did you say, O Gabriel, He shall be great, for great, indeed, He is!

He shall be great, again, in the prevalence of His merits. Never a Being had such merit as Christ. His life and death cover all Believers from head to foot with a perfect obedience to the Law of God! With royal vesture are they cladSolomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these! His blood has washed Believers white as the driven snow and His righteousness has made them to be accepted in the Beloved. He has such merit with God that He deserves of the Most High whatever He wills to askand He asks for His people that they shall have every blessing necessary for eternal life and perfection! He is great, indeed, my Brothers and Sisters, when we think that He has clothed us all in His righteousness and washed us all in His blood!

Nor us alone, but ten thousands times ten thousands of His redeemed stand, today, in the wedding dress of His eternal merit and plead before God a claim that can never be deniedthe claim of a perfect obedience which must always please the Fathers heart! Oh, what mercy is that which has turned our Hell to Heaven; transformed our disease into health and lifted us from the dunghill and set us among the princes of His people! In Infinite power to remove sin, to perfume with acceptance, to clothe with righteousness, to win blessings, to preserve saints and to save to the uttermost, the Lord Jesus is great beyond all greatness!

My theme will never be exhausted, though I may be. Let me not delay to add that our Lord Jesus Christ is great in the number of His saved ones. I do not believe in a little Christ, or a little Heaven, or a little company before the Throne of God, or a few that shall be saved! Hear this, for I would gladly reply to a lie that is often stated and is the last resort of those who assail the Doctrines of Grace! They say that we believe that God has left the great mass of His creatures to perish and has arbitrarily chosen an elect few. We have never thought such a thing! We believe that the Lord has an elect MANY! And it is our joy and delight to think of them as a number that no man can number!

Oh, they say, you think that the few who go to your little Bethel or Salem are the elect of God. That, Sirs, is what you invent for your own purposes! We have never said anything of the sort! We rejoice to believe that as many as the stars of Heaven shall be the redeemed of Christthat as many as the sands that are upon the seashore, even an innumerable company, are those for whom Christ has shed His precious blood that He might effectually redeem them! As I look up to the Heaven of the sanctified, my minds eyes do not see a few dozen saints met together in select circles of exclusivenessno, my eyes are dazzled with the countless lights which shine, each one, from the illustrious brows of the redeemed! Illustrious, I say, for each glorified one wears upon his forehead the name of the Most High!

My heart is glad to turn away from the multitude that throng the broad way and to see a greater multitude that throng the heavenly fields and, day without night, celebrate redemption by the blood of the Lamb! Have they not washed their robes and made them white in His blood? In all things our Lord will have the pre-eminenceand this shall be the case in the number of His followersHe shall therein vanquish His great enemy! His redeemed shall fly as a cloud, as doves to their windows. Countless as the drops of morning dew shall His people be in the day of His power. He shall be great in the host of His adherents in Glory.

Multitudes upon earth are even now pursuing their road to Heaven and greater hosts are yet to follow them. A day shall be when the people of God shall be increased exceedinglyabove anything that we see at the presentthey shall spring up as the grass and as willows by the watercourses, as if every stone that heard the ripple of the brook had been turned into a man! The seed of the Lord Jesus Christ shall multiply till arithmetic shall be utterly baffled and numeration shall fail. He is greata great Savior of a great mass of great sinners who shall, by His redeeming arm, be brought safely, without fail, to His right hand in endless Glory! As the tribes of the natural Israel increased exceedingly, so, also, shall the spiritual Israel. The Lord shall multiply His Zion with men as with a flockand thus shall the King of Israel be great!

Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus Christ shall be great in the estimation of His people. If I were to try, tonight, to praise my Lord to the highest heavens, my Brother might well follow me and extol our Lord much more. Then I would get up from my seat, again, and I would not rest until I found yet loftier praises for my Lord and God! Then might my dear Brother return to the happy task and excel me, yet again! And then, for sure, I would be on my feet a third time and keep up the hallowed rivalry, lauding and magnifying Jesus to my minds utmost! And, if the Lord permitted, we would never stop, for I would give in to no man in my desire to extol my Lord Jesus Christ! I am sure that none of His people would give way to others in a humble sense of supreme indebtedness, but each one would say, There is something which He has done for me which He never did for you. There is some point of view in which He is greater to me than He is to you.

Brothers and Sisters, I admit that there are many points in which He is greater to you than He is to me! But yet, to me He is higher than Heaven, vaster than eternity, more delightful than Paradise, more blessed than blessedness itself! If I could speak of Him according to my souls desire, I would speak in great capital letters and not in the small italics which I am compelled to use. If I could speak as I would, I would make winds and waves my orators and cause the whole universe to become one open mouth with which to proclaim the praises of Emmanuel! If all eternity would speak as though it, too, were but one tongue, yet it could not tell all the charms of His love and the sureness of His faithfulness and His truth! We must leave off somewhere, but, truly, if it is the point of our estimation of Him, we can never express our overwhelming sense of His honor, His excellence, His sweetness!

Oh, that He were praised by every creature that has breath! Oh, that every minute placed another gem in His crown! Oh, that every soul that breathes did continue to breathe out nothing but hosannas and hallelujahs unto Him, for He deserves all possible praises! Do you hear the crash of the multitudinous music of Heaven? It is like many waters and like the mighty waves of the seaand it is all for Him! Can you hear the charming notes of harpers harping with their harps? Their harpings are all for Him! Can you conceive the unutterable joys of the glorified? Every felicity of eternity is a song to His honor! Heaven and earth shall yet be full of the brightness of His Glory! Who can look the sun in the face in the height of his noontide? Who can tell the illimitable greatnesses of the Son of God?

*To Him, even to Him, let all praises be,   
For He has redeemed our souls with blood*

*And set the captives free!*   
He has made us unto our God both kings and priestsand we shall reign with Him forever and forever! Truly, He is great, and shall be eternally great!

But, oh, Brothers and Sisters, how great must Christ be in the glory of Heaven! We have never seen that. Some of us shall see it very soon *For we are in the border-land,   
The heavenly countrys near at hand!   
A step is all twixt us and rest,   
Een now we converse with the blest.*

But the greatness of Christ in Heaven! Surely this is the grand sight for which we long to go to Heaventhat we may behold His Glory! The Gory which He had with the Father before the world was, and the Glory which He has gained by His service for the Father here below! Has He not said, Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory? What honor and majesty surround our Prince in the metropolis of His empire! What is this city? From where comes its brightness? The sun is dim. The moon no more displays herself. The glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the Light thereof.

The whole city shines in the Redeemers Glory! And who are these that come trooping down the golden streets?these shining ones, each one comparable to a living, moving sun? Each one as bright as the star of the morning? Ask them where their brightness comes from and they tell you that the Glory of Christ has risen upon them and they are reflecting His brightness as the moon reflects the brilliant radiance of the sun! If you sit down with one of these shining ones and hear him tell his story, the sum of the matter will be, Not unto us; but unto Him that loved us, be honor and glory. This will be the substance of every testimonyHe loved me and gave Himself for me. But they will put it something like thisHE loved me! He, that great HE!

How they will pronounce it as they point to His GloryHE loved me that little me. They will sink their voices, oh, so low, as with wonder and surprise they express their admiration that ever He could have loved such unworthy ones as they were. But I must notdare nottry to touch upon the

Glory of Christ upon the Throne of the Father. Certain great divines have written upon the Glory of Christ, but I will guarantee you that when they died and went to Heaven, they half wished that they could come back again to amend their most glowing pages! Ah me, what can ignorance say of the All-Wise? What do blinking owls know of high noon? What do we poor limited creatures, babes of yesterday, know of the Infinite, the Ancient of Days and of the splendor that comes from the Firstborn at the right hand of the Most High?

It would need an angel to tell us that but, perhaps if he did, either we would not understand, or else what we did understand would overpower us and we should fall before our Lord as dead! The heavens are now telling the Glory of our Lord, but the half of it will never be told throughout ages of ages. Assuredly, concerning our adorable Lord Jesus, it is true He shall be great.

II. Now, by your leave, I want to turn the subject around a little and look at it in another light. He shall be great, and He is so, for HE IS WITH GREAT THINGS. He is a Savior and a great one. As I have already said, it was a great ruin which He came to restore. The wind came from the abyss and smote the four corners of the house of manhood and it fell. Devils laughed and triumphed as they saw Gods handiwork spoiled. Human nature sank in shame. Paradise was blasted, sin was triumphant and the fiery sword was set at Edens gate to exclude us. It was a hideous ruin. But, oh, when Christ came, He brought a great salvation! He came to prepare a better Paradise and to plant in it a better Tree of Life. He came to give us possession of it upon a better tenure than before. Oh, He is a great Savior! He worked amid the chaos of the Fall and restored what Adam had destroyed!

And, Beloved, we were covered with great sinsome of us, especially so. But He shall be great, and therefore He makes short work of great sin! Great sinners, what a joy it ought to be to you to think that He is great and, therefore, has come to rescue such as you are and deal with such difficulties as beset and surround you! What if sin is great? His arrangement for its removal is great, too. Look, there, at Calvary, and if you can see it through your blinding tears, behold the Sacrifice He offered once and for all to put away sin! Regard the old Tabernacle and its faulty typesAaron has offered his bullock which has smoked to Heaven, but no result has followed! Aaron has brought his lambs, his goats, his rams and their blood in basins is thrown at the foot of the altarthe whole soil of the Tabernacle is saturated with the blood of bullocks and of goats! And no result has come of itthese can never take away sin!

See, now, the greater Sacrifice which Jesus brings. That great High Priest of ours is great, indeed, for He has offered up Himself without spot unto God! Lo, on His great altar there smokes to Heaven no longer clouding incense or burning flesh, but the body and soul of the appointed Substitute offered up in sacrifice for men! We have, none of us, a due conception of the grandeur of that vicarious offering which at once and forever made an end of sin! Think of it carefully and in detail. Count it no light thing that He who was the Fathers equal; that He who was pure and perfect in both Natures became a curse for usand was made sin for us and presented Himself as a Victim to Justice on our behalf!

This is a wonder among wonders, as much exceeding miracle as miracle exceeds the most commonplace fact! It overtops the highest lips of thought, that He who was offended should expiate the offense! He who was perfect should suffer punishment! He who was all Goodness should be made sin and He who was all Love should be forsaken of the God of Love! What merit and majesty are found in His glorious oblation! Great is the sin, but greater is the Sacrifice! The Atonement has covered the guilt and left a margin of abounding righteousness! Beloved, what a mercy it is for us that we have such a High Priest, for if you and I are burdened, tonight, with great transgression, there is great pardons to be had! Pardon so great that it actually annihilates the sinpardon so great that the sin is cast behind Jehovahs back while the pardon rings out perpetual notes of joy and peace in the soul

*His the pardon, ours the sin   
Great the pardon great.   
Great His good which healed our ill,   
Great His love which killed our hate.*

He shall be great, indeed, who has worked us so great a salvation. And now, dear Friends, you and I, being greatly pardoned through the great Sacrifice, are journeying through the wilderness toward Canaan and we have great needs pressing upon us every day. We are poverty, itself, and only All-Sufficiency can supply usand that is found in Jesus. We need great abundance of foodthe heavenly Bread lies around the camp and each may fill his own. We require rivers of Living Waterthe smitten Rock yields us a ceaseless floodthe stream never ceases. We have great demands, but Christ has great supplies. Between here and Heaven we shall have, perhaps, greater needs than we have yet known, but, all along, every resting place is ready, stores are laid up, good cheer is stored, nothing has been overlooked. The commissariat of the Eternal is absolutely perfect!

Do you feel, sometimes, so thirsty for Grace that like Behemoth, you could drink up Jordan at a draught? More than that river could hold is given you! Drink abundantly, for Christ has prepared you a bottomless sea of Grace to fill you with all the fullness of God! Deprive not yourselves and doubt not your Saviorwhy should you limit the Holy One of Israel? Be great in your experience of His all-sufficiency and great in your praises of His bountyand then in Heaven you shall pour at His feet great treasures of gratitude forever and ever. Yes, and He is a Christ of great preparations. He is engaged before the Throne of God, today, in preparing a great Heaven for His people!

It will be made up of great deliverance, great peace, great rest, great joy, great victory, great discovery, great fellowship, great rapture, great glory! He is preparing for His redeemed no little Heaven, no starveling banquet, no narrow delight! He is a great Creator and He is creating a great Paradise wherein a great multitude shall be greatly happy forever and ever! He shall be greatgreat in the bliss of His innumerable elect! If we once get within the pearly gates and walk those golden streets, we are not ashamed, tonight, to vow that He shall be greatwe will make Him glorious before His holy angels!

If praises can make Him great, our praises shall ring out night and day at the very loudestand ten thousands times ten thousands of the glorified shall join with us in perpetual hallelujahs to Him who loved us before all worldsand will still love us when all worlds shall cease to be! He shall be great. He must be great! If we live, it shall be our business to sing like the Virgin, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

III. I have come to a close when I have said a few words upon the last point, which is thisHIS GREATNESS WILL SOON APPEAR. It now lies under a cloud to mens bleary eyes. They still belittle Him with their vague and vain thoughts, but it shall not always be so. It is midnight with His honor, here, just nowor if it isnt midnight, it is much the same, for men are stone blind. But it will not long be darkness, nor shall human minds be blinded forever. My eyes foresee the dawning. Did you hear the clarion just now? I dream not that ears of flesh can catch the sound as yet, but the ears of faith can hear it! The trumpet rings out exceedingly loud and long! And after the trumpet there is heard this voiceBehold, the Bridegroom comes! Go you forth to meet Him. Hear you not the shouts of armiesLo, He comes! Lo, He comes! Lo, He comes! Right gladly I hear the cry. Let the world ring with the notes of joy. He comes! That trumpet proclaims Him!

I shall propound no order, now, as to how predicted events shall happen, but I know this, that the Lord shall reign forever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords. Hallelujah! He shall be great. The nations shall bow at His feet. Rebellious enemies shall acknowledge Him as their King. The whole universe shall be filled with the Glory of God! There shall be left no space where this Light of God shall not shine. He shall be great. To Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Fret not yourselves, Brothers and Sisters, because of the false doctrine which roams through the world today. Worry not your hearts as though Christ were defeated. He is clad in shining armor through which no dart of error can ever pierce.

He lingers for a little while upon the hills, surveying the battlefield with eagle eyes. He leaves His poor servants to prove how weak they are, as they almost turn their backs in the day of battle. He lets Heaven and earth see the weakness of an arm of flesh. But courage, Brothers and Sisters! The Prince Emmanuel hastens! You may hear His horse hoofs on the road. He is near! On white horses shall His chosen follow Him, going forth conquering and to conquer, for the battle is the Lords and He will deliver the enemy into our hands. The Lord shall reign forever and ever king of kings! Hallelujah! He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

The day is coming when the mighty progress of the Gospel shall make Christ to be great among men! And then you need not listen long to hear that other trumpet which shall wake the sleeping dead. The Risen One descends. Resurrection is at hand! Oh, what greatness will be upon Christ in that hour when all shall leave their graves, even the whole multitude of the slain of death! He shall be glorious among them, the First-fruits of the Resurrection, illustrious in those who rise by virtue of His rising! Oh, what honor will He have that day! Jesus, You are He whom Your elect shall praise as they see You victorious over Death in all those quickened myriads!

Then shall come the Judgmentand oh, how great will Christ be in mens eyes in that day when He sits upon the Throne and holds the scales of justice and judges men for the deeds done in the body! I guarantee you that none will deny His Godhead in that day! None will proclaim themselves His adversaries in that dread hour! The earth is reeling! The sky is crumbling! The stars are falling! The sun is quenched! The moon is black as sackcloth! And Jesus is sitting on the Throne! A cry is heard from all His enemies. Hide us, mountains! Fall upon us, rocks! Hide us from His face! That face of Hiscalm, quiet and triumphantshall be terrible to them.

They will cry in horror, Hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. But they cannot be hidden! Fly where they may, those eyes pursue themthose eyes of love more terrible than flames of wrath! Oil, though it is soft, yet burns furiouslyand Love on fire is Hell! Fiercer than a lion on his prey is Love when once it grows angry for holiness sake and the Truth of Gods sake! In that day those who know His love shall admire Him beyond measure, but those who know His wrath shall equally feel that He is great. Though it is their Hell to feel it, yet shall they know that there is none so great as He when He shall take the iron rod and dash them in pieces like a potters vessel! Their cries of remorse and despair, as they rise up to the Throne of His awful majesty, shall proclaim to an awe-struck universe that Jesus is great! 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.

He shall be great, finally, when He shall gather all His elect about Him when all the souls redeemed by blood shall assemble within His palace gate to worship Him. Oh, what a sight it will be when He is seen as the center, while, far away from north, south, east and west, a blazing host of shining ones, all glorious in His Glory, shall, in ever-widening circles, surround His Person and His Throneall bowing down before the Son of God and crying, Hallelujah! as they adore Him! Not one will doubt Him nor oppose Him there! Oh, what a sight it shall be when everyone shall praise Him to the uttermostwhen from every heart shall leap up reverent love, when every tongue shall sound forth His honors, when there shall be no division, no discord, no jarring notesand countless armies shall as one man adore the Lord whom they love!

Again they say, Hallelujah! and the incense of their adoration goes up forever and ever. Oh, for that grandest of cries, Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigns and His Son is exalted to sit with Him upon the Throne of His Glory forever and ever! Truly, He shall be great! Oh, make Him great tonight, poor Sinner, by trusting Him! Make Him great tonight, dear child of God, by longing for Him! Make Him great as you come to the table by hungering after Him! Count it a great privilege to eat and drink with Him with overflowing delight!

Come with a great hunger and a great thirst after Him and take Him into your very self, and say, He is my breadHe is my drink! He is my lifeHe is my All. All the while let your spirit live by adoring and let every pulse of your body beat to His honor. Tune your hand, your heart, your tongue to this one song, Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah! Unto Him that loved us and died for us, and rose again, be glory forever and ever!

**To the Lamb that was slain all honor be paid, Let crowns without number encircle His head! Let blessing, and glory, and riches, and might, Be ascribed evermore by angels of light.**

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONLuke 1:5-80.*** HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK387, 414. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1514 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE KEYNOTE OF A CHOICE SONNET   
NO. 1514

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. My soul does magnify the Lord.   
Luke 1:46.

MARY had received a wonderful intimation from Heaven of which she herself scarcely understood the full length and breadth. Her faith had apprehended a great promise which, as yet, her mind hardly comprehended. Her prayer, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Your word, showed her joyful submission and childlike confidence and this made her blessed with the blessedness of patient hope. Under Divine guidance she made a speedy journey into the hill country to see her cousin Elizabeth and from her she received a confirmation of the wonderful tidings which the angel had brought to her cousin, Elizabeth, herself had been favored from above, for the Lord had looked upon her and taken away from her the reproach of barrenness. Among other choice words, Elizabeth said to her, Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

When Mary had thus been comforted by her friend and her spirit had been elevated and her confidence confirmed, she began to sing unto the Lord most sweetly, saying, My soul does magnify the Lord. Now, if it is a good time with any of youif in communion with some older Believer your confidence has been strengthenedmake sure that the Lord has a return for it. When your heart is lifted up, then lift up the name of the Lord! Exalt Him when He exalts you. You will, perhaps, tell me that the Virgin had a very special reason for magnifying the Lord and I answer, Assuredly she had. Blessed is she among women, and we are not backward to acknowledge the eminent honor which was put upon her!

Blessed, indeed, she was and highly favored! But yet, is there any true Believer who has not, also, received special favor of the Lord? Sitting down quietly in our chamber, can we not, each one, say that the Lord has favored him or her with some special token of Divine love? I think there is something about each Believers case which renders it special. We are, none of us, exactly like our Brethren, for the manifestations of Divine Grace are very various and there are some bright lines about your case, Brothers and Sisters, which will be seen nowhere else and some peculiar manifestations about your happiness of which no one else can tell.

I might not be straining words if I were to say to many a Sister in Christ here, Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women! And I might say the same to many a Brother here, Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among men! The Lord has done great things for you and let your spirit be glad. True, there is one point in which we cannot be compared, literally, to Mary. She was to be the mother of the human Nature of our Lord! But there is a parallel case in each one of us in which a higher mysterya more spiritual mysterygives us a like privilege, for, behold, the Holy Spirit dwells in each Believer! He lives within us as within a temple and reigns within us as in a palace! If we are partakers of the Holy Spirit, what more can we desire by way of favor from God and what greater honor can be bestowed upon us?

It was by Mary that the Word became Incarnate, but so also is it by us, for we can make Gods Word stand out visibly in our lives! It is ours to turn into actual, palpable existence among the sons of men the glorious Spirit of Grace and Truth which we find in the Word of God! Truly did our Lord speak when He said to His disciples, These are My mother and sister and brother. We bear as close a relationship to Christ as did the Virgin mother and we, in some sense, take the same position spiritually which she took up corporeally in reference to Him. May He be formed in us the hope of Glory and may it be ours to tend His infant cause in the world and watch over it as a nurse does over a child and spend our life and strength in endeavoring to bring that infant cause to maturity, even though a sword should pass through our own heart while we cherish the babe!

But now, having introduced to you her Magnificat, we will dwell upon these words, My soul does magnify the Lord, and I do earnestly hope that many of us can adopt the language without being guilty of falsehood. I hope we can as truly say as Mary did, My soul does magnify the Lord. If there are any of you present tonight who cannot say it, get to your chambers, fall upon your knees and cry to the Lord to help you to do so, for as long as a man cannot magnify God, he is not fit for Heaven where the praises of God are the eternal occupation of all the blessed spirits! If you cannot magnify God, it is probably because you are magnifying yourself! May the Lord cut self down and make nothing of youand then grant you Grace to make everything of Him. When you sink in your own estimation, then will God rise in your esteem. May God the Holy Spirit make it so!

I. Touching these words, I notice that, first, our text suggests to us AN OCCUPATION FOR ALL GRACIOUS PEOPLEMy soul does magnify the Lord. Here is an occupation for all of us who know the Lord and have been born into His family. Observe, it is an occupation which may be followed by all sorts of people. This humble woman speaks of her low estate and yet she could magnify the Lord! All Believers, of every rank and condition, can attend to this work. There are some things that you cannot do, but this one thing every gracious heart can do and should delight to do, namely, to magnify the Lord.

This is an occupation which can be followed in all places. You need not go up to the meeting house to magnify the Lord, you can do it at home! You need not step out of your own quiet little room, for you may sit still and, all alone, you may magnify the Lord! You may be tossed about upon the sea in a storm, but you may trust His name and be calm and so magnify Him. Or, you may not be a traveler and never go a hundred yards out of the village in which you were born, but you may magnify the Lord just as well for all that

*Whereer we seek Him He is found,   
And every place is hallowed ground*

and in every place this hallowed occupation may be carried out and we may always sayat least the place will not prevent our sayingMy soul does magnify the Lord.

This is not an occupation which requires a crowded congregation, it can be fitly performed in solitude. I suppose that this sonnet of the Virgin was sung with only one to hear it, her cousin Elizabeth. There is a quorum for Gods praise even where there is only one, but, where there are two that agree to praise God, then is the praise exceedingly sweet. Ah, my dear Sisters, you will never stand up to speak to thousands and many of my Brothers now present would be very timid if they had to praise the Lord before a dozen! Never mind about that. Praise does not require even two or three, but in the quiet of the night, or in the loneliness of the forest, far away from the haunts of men, your soul may pursue this blessed task and daily, hourly, constantly singMy soul does magnify the Lord.

This is an occupation, also, dear Friends, which requires no money. Mary was a poor maiden. She had no gold or silver and yet did she sweetly say, My soul does magnify the Lord. It is an honorable thing to be entrusted with this worlds treasure to lay it out for Jesus. The Church has its temporal needs and happy is that man who is privileged to supply them. But this kind of work can be followed by the child who has no money and by the workwoman who scarcely knows how to find bread for herself! It may be followed by the poor man reduced to the workhouse and by the poor woman who lies in the infirmary breathing out her life. My soul does magnify the Lord, is as fit for paupers as for peers!

Oh, these are golden notes and those that use them have golden mouths, as golden as Chrysostom of old, even though they have to say, Silver and gold I have none. And this is an occupation, dear Friends, which I commend to all here present, because it does not require great talent. A simpleton may sing, My soul does magnify the Lord. We have, each one, a soul and when that soul has been renewed by Grace, it can follow this blessed pursuit of magnifying the Lord. Perhaps you have not the abilities of Mary, for she was, doubtless, a woman of considerable culture, like Hannah who preceded her, whose song she partly borrowed.

Hannah seems to me to be one of the most gifted women of the Old Testament and to be worthy of more notice than is generally given to her. But if you could not write a hymn; if you could not compose a verse; if you have no ability that way, yes, and if you cannot singand there are some of us that have such cracked voices that we never shall! And there are one or two Brethren here who have such bad ears for time that I generally hear them a note behind everybody else, as I did tonightwell, never mind about thatour souls can magnify the Lord! It is an occupation that does not depend upon the voice, or upon any kind of talent whatever! Those who sing worst to the ear of man may, perhaps, sing best to the ear of God! And those who have the least apparent ability may, from the warmth of their heart and the ardor of their devotion, really have the greatest capacity, in Gods judgment, for magnifying His name!

My soul does magnify the Lord. I would invite all my Brothers and Sisters to take this for their occupation as long as they live and never to cease from it. No, even should death, for a moment, suspend it, let them so praise God that it shall be no new work for them to begin again and praise Him forever in Heaven! Dear Friends, albeit that this magnifying of the Lord is an occupation to be taken up by all Christians, do not let us think little of it. To magnify the Lord, seems to me, the grandest thing we mortals do, for, as I have already said, it is the occupation of Heaven! When the saints of the Most High pass into their glorified state, they have nothing else to do but to magnify the Lord!

The word signifies, to put it in a Saxon form instead of a Latin one, to greaten God. We cannot make Him really greater, but we can show forth His greatness. We can make Him appear greater. We can make others have greater thoughts of Him and that we do when we are praising Him. We can, ourselves, try to have greater and yet greater thoughts of Him make Him to our apprehension a greater God than we once knew Him to beand this, I say, is no mean occupation because it is followed in Heaven by all redeemed and perfected spirits. Even here it is the end of everything! Praying is the end of preaching, for preaching and hearing are nothing, in themselves, unless men are brought to Christ and led to prayer!

But then praying is not the end praising is the end of praying. Prayer is the stalk of the corn, but praise is the ear of the cornit is the harvest itself. When God is praised, we have come to the ultimatum. This is the thing for which all other things are designed. We are to be saved for this end, To the praise of the glory of His Grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved. We are not saved for our own sakes. How often does the Scripture tell us this in sense and sometimes in words, Not for your sakes do I this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. The Glory of God is, to my mind, the highest conceivable endit certainly is the chief end of my being.

So, my dear Brother, if you cannot go out to preachif, after looking over all your situation, you feel that your sickness and other circumstances may excuse you from active serviceand even if you are compelled to stay in your beddo not suppose that you are useless as to the highest end of your being! You may still serve Him by lying upon the couch of pain and magnifying the Lord by patience! Have you ever looked at those lovely lilies which adorn our gardens with their golden petals and their milk-white leaves? How they praise God! And yet they never sing. You do not even hear a rustle, but they stand still and praise God by existingby just, as it were, enjoying the sun and the dew and showing what God can do.

A genuine Christian shut up under pain and sickness may glorify God by being His beloved child; by receiving the love of God; by showing, in his common daily character, (which is only noticeable from its holiness), what the Grace of God can do. Oh may this be the occupation of all of us all since it is so noble a pursuit! My soul does magnify the Lord. Come, what are you doing tonight? Have you been, during this day, murmuring and complaining and grumbling? End that and begin praising! Some of you are farmers and I have no doubt you have grumbled because of the weather. I do not wonder, but I hope that you will not do it any more, but rather believe that God knows better about skies and clods and clouds and crops than you do.

If we had the management of the weather, I have no doubt we think we should do it very splendidly, but I question whether we should not ruin all creation! Our great Lord and Master knows how to manage everything. Let us cease from all criticism of what He does and say, My soul does not grumble. My soul does not complain. I have taken up a better business than that. My soul does magnify the Lord. That is her one engagement from which she will never cease.

II. Secondly, if you look at the text from another point of view, it provides for us A REMEDY FOR SELF-CONGRATULATION. If any one of us had been favored as Mary was, with the promise that we should become the parent of the Savior, do you not think that we should have felt exceedingly lifted up? It was natural that she should be proud, but it was gracious on her part that she was humble. Instead of magnifying herself she magnified the Lord. It was a great thing and somebody must be magnified for it.

Nature would have said, Mary, magnify yourself, but Grace said, Mary, magnify the Lord. If the Lord has been very gracious to any one of us, our only way to escape from vain-glorious pride which will be exceedingly wicked if we indulge in it, is by giving vent to our feelings in quite another direction. Do you notice how she sets off the greatness of God by her own insignificance? He that is mighty has done to me great things. To me, she says. They are great things and He is mighty, but they are to me. He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. Over against the greatness of Gods goodness to you, be sure to set in contrast your own meanness and unworthiness.

Has the Lord redeemed you, called you, justified you, sanctified you, set you in His Church and given you a name and a place among His people? When you are inclined to run up the flag and to glory in your flesh, remember who you are and what you are and the hole of the pit from which you were drawn and the rock out of which you were hewn and say, Why me, Lord? Why me? Begin to magnify the name of the Lord and that will be a death blow to the temptation of pride.

Mary had a specialtyno one else would be the mother of our Lord but so have we. Electing love has pitched on us! Many have been passed by and the Lord has loved us with a special love. Yet we cannot rejoice in it so as to glory in ourselves, for this election is according to His sovereign will and not of ourselves. It is all of Grace and free favor and not according to merit. Therefore my soul does magnify the Lord for everlasting love and special redemption. Why this amazing goodness to me? What am I and what is my fathers house, that You, O Lord, should choose me?

Mary knew, also, that she was to be famous. All generations shall call me blessed. But notice how she balances her fame with another fame. She says, Holy is His name and His mercy is on them that fear Him. She magnifies the name of the Lord! If He has given her a measure of honor, she lays it at His feet. Mind you, do the same. Be not so vain as to be lifted up with a little success. We have all passed through this test of character and in the refining pot, how few of us have borne the fire without loss! Perhaps you have preached a sermon and God has blessed it the congregation is increased and crowds are gathering.

The probability, also, is that the devil whispers, You are a capital preacher. Well done! You put your point admirably! God is blessing you. There must be something admirable in your character and abilities. Away, away, you fiend of Hell! This is ruinous pride! But suppose, dear Brother, that the fiend will not go away while he finds you musing upon your success? What are you to do? Try him with thisMy soul does magnify the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord that ever He should make use of such a poor, unsuitable instrument as yourself! Give Him all the honor and all the glory, if honor and glory there are, and see if the archenemy does not take to flight, for Gods praises are abhorrent to the devil!

In whatever capacity you are serving the Lord, if He puts any honor upon you, mind you give it all back to Him. Sedulously and carefully endeavor to do this, for robbery here will be fatal. He will not give His Glory to another. If we begin to pilfer, even, a little of the praise, we shall find that our Master will reckon us to be unfaithful stewards and give us a discharge. If we glory in our strength, we may have to go out and shake ourselves like Samson when his hair was lost because the Lord has taken our strength away from us. A heart that is lifted up with self-esteem will soon be cast down in the mire.

Mary knew that Gods favors are given to us, not that we may congratulate ourselves, but that we may worship Him and she acted accordingly. If Grace comes to you, my Brother, it is a wanton waste of it to pride yourself upon it. Like the manna in the Israelites house when kept till the morning, it will breed worms and stinkno worm ever brought swifter decay than pride! Bear the shield of your honor as an armor-bearer for your Lord. Know that you have nothing but what belongs to Him. Use all for Him and glorify Him for all and in all and so will you do well. I recommend the text, then, as a cure for prideMy soul does magnify the Lord.

III. Thirdly and I will be brief on each point, the text is A FRUITFUL UTTERANCE FOR HOLY FEELINGS. My soul does magnify the Lord is evidently the overflow of a full soul. There must have been great mixture of feeling in the heart of this holy woman, but these few words furnished expression for every variety of her emotions. Those feelings were of an opposite character and yet they all spoke by this one sentence. It is clear that she was filled with wonder. Her thoughtful spirit asked, how can so great a thing be true of me? Shall the Son of the Highest be born of Mary, the village maiden? Oh, miracle of condescension!

With the amazement there was not mingled the unbelief which too often comes of wonder, but an expectation of the promised marvel. She believed that the things which were spoken to her would be performed by the Lord and she looked that God should keep His Word to her. How sweetly those two feelings, wonder and expectation, are blended, hidden away and yet expressed in these few words, My soul does magnify the Lord! It is as though she had said, I cannot understand the favor promised me. How glorious in His Grace is the Lord my God! But I expect the blessing. I am sure of it, for the Lord is true! So I praise Him concerning it. The sentence is tinged with two fair colors, the vermilion of wonder and the azure of hope and they meet harmoniously upon the same ground. The words are wonderful on that account.

Now take two other mental states. The first would be her believing. She was not like Zacharias, who needed to be struck dumb because he doubted the Word of the Lord. Mary had faith and yet, at the same time, she must have been awe-stricken by the revelation. That she should give birth to the Son of the Highest must have utterly abashed and overwhelmed her. Now both these states of mind are herefaith and awe. Faith says, I know that the angels message is true and therefore my soul does magnify the Lord. Awe says, What a solemn thing it is that God should come to dwell in my breast! My soul does magnify the Lord.

Thus, in these words, confidence and reverence have met together, assurance and adoration have kissed each other! Here is faith with its familiarity and devotion with its godly fear. Here, also, you very clearly perceive two other holy emotions. Her humility is apparent and in the text it seems to ask the question, How can this happen to me? How can it be that such a poor woman, affianced to a humble carpenter, should be the mother of my Lord? Humility sheds its perfume here like a violet hidden away.

She seems to say, Not unto me, not unto me be the glory! My soul does magnify the Lord. But that humility is not of the cringing and crouching kind which draws back from God, for it is clearly mixed with love. I rejoice in my gracious Lord, she seems to say, I bless Him: I love Him: I praise Him. My soul does magnify the Lord. I am not worthy of His promised visitation, but it will be mine and infinite condescension will do this thing unto me. Therefore do I love my God and I draw near to Him. My soul does magnify the Lord.

Brothers and Sisters, you will often find the language of my text the most expressive of utterances for all that is good in your minds. Many sweet passions, like little birds, may fold their wings and dwell together in this one well-compacted nestMy soul does magnify the Lord, Holy emotions may fly here in swarms and make the text like a hive of bees stored with honey. As I turn and think it over, it sheds abroad its own spirit within me as spices breathe out their own perfume and I cry, My soul does magnify Him. I think I perceive in these words a singular mixture of admiration and calm thoughta wonder in which there is no surprise.

The blessed Virgin is evidently, as I have said before, wonder-struck that such a thing should come to her and yet there is about that wonder no startling of amazement, but a marveling which is the result of previous careful thought. She had considered the prophecies and promises and saw them about to be fulfilled in her seed. She sang in the 54th and 55th verses, He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever. She had turned over the subject in her mind and she came to the conclusion, He has said He will do this. It is as He spoke.

So, oftentimes, when you get a mercy given to you, you will be surprised at it at first, but afterwards you will say, This is even as the Lord promised to me. He does no new thing to His servant. It is only my forgetfulness that has made me to be astonished. Did He not promise that He would help methat He would deliver methat He would give me all that I needed? And inasmuch as He has done it in this surprising way, my soul does magnify Him twice over for the wonderful mercy and for the faithfulness of His Covenant love which kept the ancient promise which He made to be yes and amen in Christ Jesus.

Again, I say, I commend the text as an expression of your feelings. How sweet are the words, My soul does magnify the Lord! They are full, many-sided and natural and yet most spiritual.

V. Fourthly, I think my text may be used as A REASON FOR HOPEFULNESS. It would be well to be wrapped up in this spirit with regard to everything. The mood which bids us sing, My soul does magnify the Lord is full of a hope which will be useful in a thousand ways. For instance, concerning our own providential condition, let us magnify the Lord. Surrounded with difficulties, let us walk on with confidence because our great God is equal to every emergency and can both level the mountains and fill up the valleys.

Burdened with labors and stripped by necessities, let us maintain an unchanging cheerfulness because we magnify the might and the bounty of the eternal Jehovah whose name is God All-Sufficient! When danger is magnified by fear, let God be magnified by faith! When the troubles of our heart are enlarged, let our expectations from the Lord be enlarged, also. The same God-magnifying spirit should attend our glances into the future, if we indulge in any, and we are all too apt to do so. Ah, we would like to know, some of us, what is going to happen to us! Gladly would we steal a glance behind the screen and each one see

*What gloomy lines are writ for me,   
Or what dark scenes arise.*

There is a desire in most persons minds to draw the curtain which God has so wisely placed over the future. This is very wrong of us and yet it is as common as it is blamable. We all turn prophets, every now and then, and when we do, we prophesy evil and, therefore, it would be well if we could catch the spirit of Mary with regard to our forecasts of the future and say, My soul does magnify the Lord. Why do we set our bleary-eyed anxieties to watch the signs of Heaven? If we must pry and guess and speculate, why not employ our brighter powers and let blue-eyed hope scan the ensigns of the sky?

When we meddle with the future, how dare we foretell that which would dishonor the Lord? If we must write bitter things against ourselves, yet we ought not to write untruthful things against Him! When we forecast the future at all, let us do it in the spirit wherewith we sing, My soul does magnify the Lord. Let us be certain that we shall find Him to be a great God in the future, greatly good, wondrously gracious, magnifying His mercy! We shall have troubles, but our soul does magnify the Lord, for she foresees that we shall ride out all storms with Jesus at the helm and come safe into port.

Our anxious eyes foresee necessities, but our soul does magnify the Lord, for she sees Him with a golden key opening the treasures of David and supplying all her needs. Our troubled ears can hear the wolf, but our soul does magnify the Lord, for she sings, The Lord is my Shepherd and He will preserve me. In this spirit you may look forward to the swellings of Jordan, magnifying the living God while you lie down to die. If you faint and begin to say, Ah, I shall never be able to die triumphantly, you are minimizing and not magnifying the Lord! You are making Him little and not great. Try and say, How marvelously will He show His Grace to me, a dying worm! Oh, how wondrous He will be in the eyes of angels that will crowd the banks to hear a poor trembling soul like I go singing through the stream! My God will be great in that daythen will He lay bare His arm and therefore will I fear no evil, for He will be with meHis rod and His staff will comfort me.

Think great things of God! Greaten God! Magnify His name whenever you look forward to the future! Chase from your mind any imagination or foreboding which would detract from the greatness or the goodness of your God. Judge in the same manner with regard to the salvation of your fellow men. Never say, It is of no use inducing such a man to attend the means of Grace. He is a blaspheming wretch! All that he would do, if he heard a sermon, would be to make sport of it for the next week. I have no faith in taking such a man to hear a ministry which he would be sure to ridicule. Such unbelieving talk is making little of God! Is it not so? Is it not dishonoring God to think that His Gospel cannot reach the most depraved hearts?

Why, if I knew that a man had 7,000 devils in him, I believe the Gospel could drive them all out! Get the sinners under the sound of the Word of God and the worse they are, oftentimes, the more does God love to display the greatness of His Grace in casting down the power of their sin! Believe great things of God! I can honestly say thisthat since God saved me, I never doubted His power to save anybody! All things are possible, now that He has brought me to His feet and kept me these years as His loving child. I must think great things of God who has done such great things for so great a sinner as I am! Greaten God, my Brothers and Sisters! Greaten God! Believe great things of Him!

Believe that China can be made into a province of the celestial kingdom! Believe that India will cast her riches at Jesus feet! Believe that the round world will yet be a pearl on Christs ring finger. Do not go in for the dispiriting, despairing, unmanly, un-Christly ideas of those who say, The world is not to be converted. It is a poor wreck that will go to pieces and we are to fish off here and there one from the water-logged hulk. Brethren, never believe that we are to stand by and see the eternal defeat of God! Dream not that our God is unable to win upon the old lines and must shift the plan of the campaign. It shall never be said that God could not save the world by the preaching of the Gospel and by the work of the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, must bring in the Advent of the Lord to do it.

I believe in the coming of the Lord, but, blessed be His name, I believe, also, that the battle which He has begun in the Spirit, He will fight out in the old style and finish with a victory in the very manner in which He opened the conflict! It pleases Him, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe and it will please Him to continue to do so till the whole round earth shall ring with hallelujahs of praise to the Grace of God who, by the feeblest of His creatures, shall have defeated sin and death and Hell! Do not get into a desponding state of mind and rush into halfinsane theories of prophecy in order to excuse your unbelief and idleness! Never throw down your weapons and pretend that the victory is to be won by doting and dreamingwe are to fight to the end with the same weapons and in the same name. We will drive the devil out of the world yet, by the Grace of God, by the old, efficient weapons of the Word of God and the Spirit of God!

Greaten God and magnify His name by believing in the success of the Gospel of His dear Son. As to the nearer future, never believe any human prophecy that does not glorify God. Expect great things of God and if you hear any prediction that is not to the glory of God, conclude that it is a blunder. Oh! said one to me, this country will go back to Romanism the Gospel light will be quenched in England. Ah, dear me! Some Brethren are mightily fond of this prognostication. But, my dear Friend, there is one thing that always comforts me, namely, that God is not dead and He is not going to be defeated by the pope of Rome, or 50 popes of Rome! He will win the victory yet! Always have courage, for it is Gods cause and it is in Gods hands and, being in Gods hands, it is safe enough.

See what you are doing? Because you cannot trust Gods hand, you trust your own! You thrust out your sacrilegious arm to interfere with Gods peculiar work. What are you doing? You are about to defile Gods Ark! Remember the story of Uzzah? Pluck your hand back and leave the Ark alone. The Lord will help you to do such work as He gives you to do, but He has not made you Lord of Empires, nor Director of Providence. Leave to His sovereign sway the purposes of His eternal Grace and depend upon it, He will bring the world to Jesus feet! Christ Himself shall come! Look for Him every day, but be constant in His service, working for Him every hour.

Believe, too, that He shall reign among His ancients gloriously! And where, amidst Judeas glades, Christ has been dishonored and the false Prophet has ruledthere, too, He shall reignand Jew and Gentile shall worship and adore His ever-blessed name! I say again, magnify the Lord with all your souls! Greaten God! Expect great things in the future and with the cheery note of confidence, go forward to battle for Him whose is the victory forever and ever!

V. Once more and I have done. Our text should be used as a GUIDE IN OUR THEOLOGY. We will finish with that. Here is a very useful test for young disciples who are beginning to study Gods Word. My soul does magnify the Lord. If you will carry this with you, it will often save you from error and guide you into the Truth of God. There is certain teaching which makes a great deal of manit talks much of mans free will, ability, capacity and natural dignity. It evidently makes man the center and end of all things and God is placed in a position of service to His creature! As for the Fallfather Adam slipped and broke his little finger, or something of the kind! But this theology sees no great ruin as the result of the Fall. As for salvationit is a slight cure for a small ill and by no means the infinite Grace which we consider it to be.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, let those have this theology who like it, but do not you touch it even with a pair of tongs. It is of no use to man, for it mistakes his position and only ministers to his pride. Mans place is not on the throne, but at the foot of the Cross. Listen to another theology, in which the sinner is laid low, his sinfulness is exposed, his corruption is unfolded, Christs redemption is magnified, free Grace is extolled and the Holy Spirit is adored! That is the theology for you! Believe it! That is the theology of the Scriptures! Accept it! I do not think that you will often be led wrong if this is your mode of judgmentthat which glorifies God is true and that which does not glorify God is false.

Sometimes you will meet with an undoubted teaching of Gods Word which you do not understand. You know that the doctrine is taught in the Word, but you cannot make it coincide with some other Truth and you cannot quite see, perhaps, how it glorifies God. Then, dear Brother, dear Sister, glorify God by believing it! To believe a doctrine which you see to be true by mere reason is nothing very wonderful. There is no very great glory to God in believing what is as clear as the sun in the heavens! But to believe a Truth of God when it staggers youoh, gracious faith! Oh, blessed faith!

You will remember, perhaps, an illustration taken from Mr. Gough, where the little boy says, If mother says it is so, it is so if it is not so. That is the kind of believing for a child towards its mother and that is the sort of believing we ought to exercise towards God. I do not see the fact and I cannot quite apprehend it, but God says it is so and I believe Him. If all the philosophers in the world should contradict the Scriptures, so much the worse for the philosopherstheir contradiction makes no difference to our faith. Half a grain of Gods Word weighs more with us than a thousand tons of words or thoughts of all the modern theologians, philosophers and scientists that exist on the face of the earth!

God knows more about His own works than they do. They do but think, but the Lord knows. With regard to Truths of God which philosophers ought not to meddle with because they have not especially turned their thoughts that waythey are not more qualified to judge than the poorest man in the Church of Godno, nor one-half so much! Inasmuch as the most learned unregenerate men are dead in sin, what do they know about the living things of the children of God? Instead of setting them to judge, we will sooner trust our boys and girls that are just converted, for they know something of Divine things while carnal philosophers know nothing of!

Do not be staggered, Brothers and Sisters, but honor God, glorify God and magnify Him by believing great things and unsearchablepast your finding outwhich you know to be true because He declares them to be so. Let the ipse dixit of God stand to you in the place of all reason, being, indeed, the highest and purest reason, for God, the Infallible, speaks what must be true! So, then, I come back to where I started. Let us go forth and practically try to magnify the name of the Lord. Go home and speak well of His name! Gather your children together and tell them what a good and great God He has been.

Some of you who have a swarm of youngsters could not do better than spend half an hour in telling them of His goodness to you in all your times of trouble. Leave to your children the heirloom of gratitude. Tell them how good the Lord was to their father and how good He will be to His children. Tell your servants, tell your work people, tell anybody with whom you come in contact what a blessed God the Lord is. For my part, I never can speak well enough of His adorable name. He is the best of masters, His service is delight! He is the best of fathers, His commands are pleasure! Was there ever such a god as our God, our enemies themselves being judges?

Magnify His name by the brightness of your countenances. Rejoice and be glad in Him. When you are in sorrow and must fast, yet appear not unto men to fast, but anoint your faces and still wear a smile! Let not the world think that the servants of

the King go mourning all their days. Make the world feel what a great God you serve and what a blessed Savior Christ is and thus always let your soul magnify the Lord! God grant you Grace to do so, for Jesus sake. Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON   
DEAR FRIENDSYour continued prayers are sought for the SPECIAL SERVICES at the Tabernacle, that by their success any injury occurring through the Pastors enforced absence may be remedied. It would be an affliction, indeed, if our lifework should suffer through painful sickness, which, in itself, is a heavy cross to bear. By your prayers this will be averted and the trial will be turned into a blessing! Right thankful am I to report rapid and, I trust, real progress in my own case. Living in an unbroken series of summer days, where no cold mists are dreamed of, it is no great marvel that rheumatic pains fly away and depression of spirit departs. The healing Lord has breathed a restoring influence over land and sea and sky and I am feeling it to my great joy.

Hoping soon to be among my own people and to issue sermons newly preached, I am, to my many hearty friends, their grateful servant. *C. H. SPURGEON*   
Mentone, January 8, 1880   
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #2219 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A HARP OF TEN STRINGS   
NO. 2219

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, AUGUST 30, 1891, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.   
Luke 1:46, 47.**

IT is very clear that Mary was not beginning a new thing, for she speaks in the present tense, and in a tense which seems to have been present for a long time, My soul does magnify the Lord. Ever since she had received the wonderful tidings of the choice which God had made of her for her high position, she had begun to magnify the Lord. And when once a soul has a deep sense of Gods mercy and begins magnifying Him, there is no end to it. This grows by what it feeds uponthe more you magnify God, the more you can magnify Him. The higher you rise, the more you can see. Your view of God is increased in extent and, whereas you praised Him somewhat at the bottom of the hill, when you get nearer and nearer to the top of His exceeding goodness, you lift up the strain still more loudly and your soul does more fully and exultantly magnify the Lord!

My soul does magnify the Lord. What does it mean? The usual meaning of the word, magnify, is to make great, or to make to appear great. We say, when we use the microscope, that it magnifies so many times. The insect is the same small and tiny thing, but it is increased to our apprehension. The word is very suitable in this connection. We cannot make God greater than He is. Nor can we have any conception of His actual greatness. He is infinitely above our highest thoughts! When we meditate upon His attributes

*Imaginations utmost stretch   
In wonder dies away.*

But we magnify Him by having higher, larger, truer conceptions of Him, by making known His mighty acts and praising His glorious name so that others, too, may exalt Him in their thoughts. This is what Mary was doingshe was a woman who was given, in later life, to pondering. Those who heard what the shepherds said concerning the Holy Child Jesus, wondered, but, Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. They wonderedMary pondered. It is only the change of a letter, but it makes a great difference in the attitude of the soula change from a vague flash of interest to a deep attention of heart. She pondered. She weighed the matter. She turned it over in her mind. She thought about it. She estimated its value and result. She was like that other Mary, a meditative woman who could quietly wait at her Lords feet to hear gracious words and drink them in with yearning faith.

It is no idle occupation, then, to get alone and in your own hearts to magnify the Lordto make Him great to your mind, to your affections great in your memory, great in your expectations. It is one of the grandest exercises of the renewed nature! You need not, at such a time, think of the deep questions of Scripture. You may leave the abstruse doctrines to wiser heads, if you will, but if your very soul is bent on making God great to your own apprehension, you will be spending time in one of the most profitable ways possible to a child of God. Depend upon it, there are countless holy influences which flow from the habitual maintenance of great thoughts of Godjust as there are incalculable mischiefs which flow from our small thoughts of Him! The root of false theology is belittling God and the essence of true Divinity is greatening God, magnifying Him and enlarging our conceptions of His majesty and His Glory to the utmost degree.

But Mary did not mean, by magnifying the Lord, merely to extol Him in her own thoughts. Being a true poetess, she intended to magnify the Lord by her words. No, I must correct myselfshe did not intend to do itshe had been doing it all along! She was doing it when she came, panting and breathless, into her cousin Elizabeths house. She said, My soul does magnify the Lord. I am now in such a favored condition that I cannot open my mouth to talk to you, Elizabeth, without speaking of my Lord. My soul now seems filled with thoughts of Him. I must speak, first of all, about Him and say such things of His Grace and power as may help even you, my goodly elder sister, still to think grander thoughts of God than you have ever before enjoyed. My soul does magnify the Lord.

We must recall the fact that Mary was highly distinguished and honored. No other woman was ever blessed as she was. Perhaps no other could have borne the honor that was put upon herto be the mother of the Human Nature of our Savior. It was the highest possible honor that could be put upon mortal and the Lord knew, at the appointed time, where to find a guileless, lowly woman who could be entrusted with such a gift and yet not seek to filch away His Glory. She is not proud. No, it is a false heart that steals the revenues of God and buys the intoxicating cup of self-congratulation. The more God gives to a true heart, the more it gives to Him. Like Peters boat, which sank into the waters the more deeply, the more fully it was laden with fish, Gods true children sink in their own esteem as they are honored by their Lord! Gods gifts, when He gives Grace with them, do not puff us upthey build us up. A humble and lowly estimate of ourselves is added to a greater esteem of Him. The more God gives you, the more do you magnify Him and not yourself. Be this your ruleHe must increase and I must decrease. Be you less and less. Be you the Lords humble handmaid, yet bold and confident in your praise of Him who has done for you great things! From now on and forever, let this be the one description of your lifeMy soul does magnify the Lord; I have nothing else to do any more but to magnify Him and to rejoice in God my Savior.

A week might be profitably employed were I to attempt to preach upon each part of Marys song, but with quite another purpose in view I am going to present it to you as a whole. As I put before you this instrument of ten strings, I will ask you, just for a minute or two, to place your fingers on each of them as they shall be indicated and see whether you cannot wake some melody to the praise of the great King, some harmony in His honorwhether you cannot, at this good hour, magnify the Lord and rejoice in God your Savior! Luther used to say that the glory of Scripture was to be found in the pronouns and it is certainly true of the text. Look at the personal touch of them, how it comes over and over again! My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

At one of our Orphanage Festivals, I put before our many friends who were gathered together, several reasons why everybody should contribute to the support of the children. Indeed, I said, nobody ought to go off the ground without giving something. I was struck with one Brother who had no money with him, but who brought me his watch and chain. Oh, I said, do not give me these, these things sell for so little compared with their value. But he insisted upon my keeping them and said, I will redeem them tomorrow, but I cannot go away without giving something now. How glad I would be if every child of God here would be as earnest in adoration and say, I am going to give some praise to God at this serviceout of some of those strings I will get musicperhaps out of them all. I will endeavor with my whole heart to say, at some portion of the sermon, and from some point of view, My soul does magnify the Lord! Do I hear you whisper, My soul is very heavy. Lift it up, then, by praising the Lord! Begin a Psalm, even if at first the tune must be in a minor key! The strain will soon change and the Miserere will become a Hallelujah Chorus.

I. The first string which Mary seems to touch and which, I trust, we, too, may reach with the hand of faith, is that of THE GREAT JOY WHICH THERE IS IN THE LORD. My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. Let us bless God that our religion is not one of gloom! I do not know of any command anywhere in Scripture, Groan in the Lord always, and again, I say, Groan. From the conduct of some people we might almost imagine that they must have altered their New Testament in that particular passage and thus woefully changed the glory of the original verse, Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice. The first I ever knew of Christ, my Master, truly, was when I found myself at the foot of His Cross with the great burden that had crushed me, effectually gone. I looked round for it, wondering where it could be and, behold, it was tumbling down into His sepulcher! I have never seen it since, blessed be His name, nor do I ever want to see it again! Well do I remember the leaps I gave for joy when first I found that all my burden of guilt had been borne by Him and was now buried in the depths of His grave

*Many days have passed since then; Many changes I have seen.*

I have been to a great many wells to draw water, but when I have drawn it, and tasted it, it has been brackish as the waters of Marah. But whenever I have gone to this wellmy God, my SaviorI have never drawn one drop that was not sweet and refreshing! He who truly knows God must be glad in Himto abide in His house is to be still praising Himyes, we may exalt in Him all day long! A very notable Word of God is that which is found in the mouth of DavidGod, my exceeding joy. Other things may give us pleasure. We may be happy in the gifts of God and in His creatures, but God, Himself, the spring of all our joys, is greater than them all! Therefore, Delight yourself, also, in the Lord. This is His commandis it not a lovely one? Let no one say that the faith of the Christian is not to be exultant! It is to be a delight and so greatly does God desire us to rejoice in Him, that to the command is added a promise, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

What a religion is ours, in which delight becomes a dutyin which to be happy is to be obedient to a command! Heathen religions exact not only self-denials of a proper kind, but tortures which men invent to accustom themselves to misery. But in our holy faith, if we keep close to Christ, while it is true that we bear the cross, it is also true that the cross ceases to be a torture! In fact, it often bears us as we bear itwe discover in the service of our Master that His yoke is easy and His burden is light, and, strange to sayHis burden gives us rest and His yoke gives us liberty! We have never had anything from our Master but it has ultimately tended to our joy. Even when His rod has made us smart, He has intended it to work for our good and so it has! Praise Him, then, for such goodness!

Our religion is one of holy joy, especially with regard to our Savior. The more we understand that glorious word, Savior, the more are we ready to dance with delight. My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. The good tidings of great joy have reached us and as we, by His Grace, have believed them, He has saved us from sin, death and Hell! He has not simply promised to do it some day, but He has done itwe have been saved! What is more, we have, many of us, entered into rest by faith in Him. Salvation is to us a present experience at this hour, though we still wait for the fullness of it to be revealed in the world to come.

Oh, come, let us joy in our Savior! Let us thank Him that we have so much for which to thank Him! Let us praise Him that there is so much that we may rejoice in! No, so much that we must rejoice in! Let us adore His dear name that He has so arranged the whole plan of salvationthat it is calculated to bring Heaven to us while we are hereand to bring us who are here, into Heaven hereafter! Thus we lift up our hearts because of the great joy there is laid up for us in God. This is the first string. Touch it. Think of all the joy you have had in God. Praise Him for all the holy mirth He has given you in His Housethe bliss of communion with Him at His tablethe delights of fellowship with Him in secret. Sing to Him with a grateful heart, saying, My soul does magnify the Lord.

II. The second string we would desire to lay our fingers on is THE GODHEAD OF OUR SAVIOR. My soul does magnify the Lord. I have not a little Lord. And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. I know that my Savior is a Man and rejoice in His Humanity, but we will contend to the death for thisthat He is more than ManHe is our Savior! One human being could not redeem another, or give to God a ransom for his brother. An angels arm could not bear the tremendous load of the disaster of the Fall, but Christs arm is more than angelic! He whom we magnify as our Savior counted it not robbery to be equal with God. And when He undertook the wondrous task of our redemption, He brought the Godhead with Him to sustain Him in the more than Herculean labor. Our trust is in Jesus Christ, very God of very God! We shall never cease, not only to believe in Him, but to speak of Him, rejoice in Him and sing of Him as the Incarnate Deity. What a frozen religion that is which has not the Godhead of Christ in it! Surely, they must be men of a very sanguine and imaginative temperament who can pretend to receive any comfort out of a Christianity which has not the Divine Savior as its very center. I would as soon think of going to an iceberg to warm myself, as to a faith of that kind to find comfort! Nobody can ever praise up Christ too much for you and for methey can never say too much of His wisdom, or of His power. Every Divine attribute ascribed to Christ makes us lift up a new song unto Him, for, whatever He may be to others, He is to us God over all, blessed forever! Amen.

I wish that I could sing instead of speaking to you of Him who was with the Father before all worlds began, whose delights, even then, were with the sons of men in prospect of their creation. I wish that I could tell the wonderful story of how He entered into Covenant with God on the behalf of His people and pledged Himself to pay the debts of those His Father gave to Him. He undertook to gather into one fold, all the sheep whom He pledged Himself to purchase with His precious blood. He engaged to bring them back from all their wanderings and fold them on the hilltops of the Delectable Mountains at His Fathers feet. This He vowed to do and He has gone about His task with a zeal that clothed Him as a cloakand He will achieve the Divine purpose before He delivers up the Kingdom to God, even the Father. He shall not fail nor be discouraged.

It is our delight to hear this Son of God, this Son of Mary, this wondrous Being in His complex Nature as our Mediator, exalted and extolled, and made very high. Have you not sometimes felt that if the minister preached more about Jesus Christ, you would be very glad to hear him? I hope that is your inclination, yet I am afraid that we talk a great deal about many things rather than about our Master. Come, let me hear of Him! Sing to me or talk to me of Jesus, whose name is honey in the mouth, music in the ear and Heaven in the heart! Oh, for more praise to His holy name! Yes, some of us can touch this string and say with Mary, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

III. The third string has softer, sweeter music in it, and it may suit some of us better than the more sublime themes that we have already touched. Let us sing and magnify the LORDS LOVING CONDESCENSION, for so the blessed virgin did when she went on to say, for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. Here is something to sing about, for ours was not only a low estate, but perhaps some here would have had to say, like Gideon, My family is poor, and I am the least in my fathers house and, like he, you would have been passed over by most of the people. Perhaps even in your own family you were counted as nobody. If there was a jest uttered, you were sure to be the butt of it, and generally you were misunderstood and your actions misinterpreted. This was a trying experience for you, but from this you have been gloriously delivered. It may have been that, like Joseph, you were a little dreamy and, perhaps, you were a trifle too fond of telling your dreams. Yet, though because of this you were much put upon, the Lord, at last, raised your head above those round about you. It may have been that your lot in life was cast among the very poorest and lowest of mankind, yet the Lord has looked upon you in infinite compassion and saved you! Will you not, then, magnify Him?

If Christ wanted a people, why did He not choose the kings, princes and nobles of the earth? Instead of that, He takes the poor and makes them to know the wonders of His dying love! And instead of selecting the wisest men in the world, He takes even the most foolish and instructs them in the things of the Kingdom of God

W**onders of Grace to God belong,   
Repeat His mercies in your song.**

All of us who have been saved by Grace must still strike a more tender note, for we were sinful as well as lowly. We went astray like lost sheep and, therefore, we magnify the Lord who bought us, sought us and brought us back to His fold. It may be painful to remember what we once were, but it is well, sometimes, to go back in our thoughts to the time past when we lived in sin, that we may the better appreciate the favor of which we have been made partakers. When the Apostle Paul wrote out a catalog of those who shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, he added, And such were some of you: but you are washed. Oh, let us bless the name of the Lord and magnify Him for this! Who else could have cleansed us from our sin, or in what other Fountain save that opened to the house of David could we have plunged to rid us of our awful defilement? He stoops very low, for some of Gods elect were once the offscouring of all thingsand even when converted, many of them remained so, in the estimate of the world which sneers at humble Christians.

If the professed followers of Christ happen to meet in some fine building and worship God with grand music and gorgeous rituals, then the people of the world put up with them! They may go even so far as to patronize them, though, even then, their respect is chiefly called forth, not on behalf of the people, but because of the building, the fine music and the carriages. The carriages are especially important, for without a certain number of them at the door, it is deemed impossible to have a proper display of cultured Christianity! But the more Gods people cling to the Lord, the less likely are they to be esteemed by the vulgar judgment of unholy men. Yet the Lord has chosen such, blessed be His name! It is a great wonder to me that the Lord ever chose some of youbut it is a far greater wonder that He should ever have chosen me. I can somehow understand His love for you when I look at the gracious points in your character, though I am fully aware that they are only worked by Grace, but I cannot understand the love which He has displayed to

me, who am the least of all the saints. Oh! you say, that is what we were going to say about ourselves. Yes, I know. I am trying to put it into your mouths, so that we may all join in adoring gratitude! It is a miracle of mercy that He should have loved any of us, or stooped in His Grace to have raised such beggars from the dunghill to set us among the princes at His right hand

*Why was I made to hear Your voice,   
And enter while theres room;   
When thousands make a wretched choice, And rather starve than come.*

IV. The next string, however, is THE GREATNESS OF GODS GOODNESS, for Mary goes on to singHe has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Oh, the Lord has done great things for His people! He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name. God has made you blessed. You were once under the curse, but for you there is now no condemnation, for you are in Christ Jesus. If the curse had withered you, like some lightning-blasted oak, you would not have wondered, but, instead thereof, the gracious Lord has planted you by the rivers of water and He makes you to bring forth your fruit in your season and your leaf does not wither. The Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad. To be lifted up from that horrible pit is such a great thing that we cannot measure itbut to be set up on that Throne of Mercy exceeds our highest thoughtwho can measure that? Take your line and see if you can fathom the depth of such Grace, or measure the height of such mercy! Shall we be silent when we behold such marvelous loving kindness? God forbid it! Let us break forth in our hearts, now, with gladsome hallelujahs to Him who has done such wonderful things for us!

Think, Brothers and Sisters, you were blindHe has made you see! You were lameHe has made you leap! Worse than that, you were dead He has made you live! You were in prisonand He has made you free! Some of us were in the dungeon with our feet fast in the stocks. Can I not well remember when I did lie in that inner prison, moaning and groaning, without any voice to comfort me, or even a ray of light to cheer me in the darkness? And now that He has brought me out, shall I forget to utter my deep thanks? No! I will sing a song of deliverance that others may hear, and fear, and turn unto the Lord! But that is not all. He has not only taken us from the prison, He has raised us to the Throne of Godyou and I could go in and out of Heaven tonight if God called us thereand every angel would treat us with respect! If we entered into Glory, even though we had come from the poorest home in London, we would find that the highest angels are only ministering servants to the chosen people of God! Oh, He has done wonders for us!

I am not so much attempting to preach as trying to wake up your memory, that you may think of the goodness of the Lords Grace and say, Oh, yes, it is so, and my soul does magnify the Lord! Not one of the wonders of Divine Grace has been worked for us without deep necessity for its manifestation. If the very least Grace which may, perhaps, up to now have escaped your attention, were taken from you, where would you be? I often meet with people of God who used to be very happy and joyful, but who have fallen into despondency, and who now talk about the mercies of Gods Covenant love in such a way as to make me blush. They say, I thought I once had that blessing, Sir, and I am afraid I have not got it now, though there is nothing I long for more. Oh, what a precious thing it would be to be able to have access to God in prayer! I would give my eyes to be able to know that I am really a child of God.

Yet those of us who have those blessings do not half value them. No, Brothers and Sisters, we do not value them a thousandth part as much as we ought! Our constant song should be, Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Instead of that, we often take the gifts thoughtlessly and unthankfully from His hands. When a man is in the ocean, he may have much water over his head and not feel it, but when He comes out, if you then put a little pail of water on his head, it becomes quite a burden as he carries it. So some of you are swimming in Gods mercyyou are diving into it and you do not recognize the weight of the Glory which God has bestowed upon you. But if you should once get out of this ocean of joy and fall into a state of sadness of heart, you would begin to appreciate the weight of any one of the mercies which now do not seem to be of much consequence, or to make any claim upon your gratitude. Without waiting to lose the sense of Gods Grace, in order that we may know the value of it, let us bless Him who has done such inconceivably great things for us, and say, My soul does magnify the Lord.

V. The fifth string that I would touch is THE COMBINATION OF GRACE AND HOLINESS that there is in what God has done for us. He that is mighty has done great things for me; and holy is His name. I may not even hint at the peculiar delicacy of Marys case, but she knew that it was wholly holy and pure. Now, when the Lord has saved you and me, who did not deserve saving, He did a very wonderful act of Sovereign Grace in making us to differ, but the mercy is that He did it all justly. Nobody can say that it ought not to be done. At the Last Great Day, what God has done in His Grace will stand the test of justice, for He has never, in the splendor and lavishness of His love, violated the principles of eternal righteousness, even to save His own elect. He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name.

Sin must be punishedit has been punished in the Person of our glorious Substitute. No man can enter into Heaven unless he is perfectly purethey who are redeemed shall take no unclean thing within the gates. Every rule and mandate of the Divine empire shall be observed. The LawMaker will not be the LawBreaker even to save the sinner! But His Law shall be honored as surely as the sinner shall be saved. Sometimes I feel that I could play on this string for an hour or two. Here we have Justice magnified in Grace and holiness rejoicing in the salvation of sinners! The attributes of God are like the amazing crystal shining out with its clear white light, but which may be divided into all the colors of the prism, each different and all beautiful. The dazzling radiance of God is too glorious for our mortal eyes, but each Revelation teaches us more of His beauty and perfectness. In the ruby light of an atoning Sacrifice we are enabled to see how God is just and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. Glory be to His name for the power of Grace mingled with holiness! My soul does magnify the Lord for this wonderful salvation in which every attribute shall have its gloryjustice as well as mercy, wisdom as well as might. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Who could have invented such a plan and who could have carried it out when it was thought of? Only He who came with dyed garments from Bozrah. My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

VI. The sixth string is one which should be sweet in every way. Mary now goes on to touch the string of GODS MERCY. And His mercy is on them that fear Him. The saints of old often touched this string in the Temple. They often sang it, lifting up the refrain again and againHis mercy endures forever!

*For His mercy shall endure,   
Ever faithful, ever sure.*

Mercy! Sinner, this is the silver bell for youit is of the Lords mercies that you are not consumedbecause His compassions fail not. Listen to the heavenly music that calls you to repent and live! God delights in mercy. He waits to be gracious. Mercy! Saint, this is the golden bell for you, for you still need mercy. Standing with your foot upon the jasper doorstep of Paradise, with the pearly gate just before you, you will still need mercy to help you over the last step. And when you enter the choir of the redeemed, mercy shall be your perpetual song! In Heaven you will chant the praises of the God of Grace whose mercy endures forever.

Do you mourn over your own backsliding? God will have mercy upon you, dear child, though you have wandered since you have known Him! Come back to Him this very hour! He would woo you again. He would press you to His bosom. Have you not often been restored? Have you not often had your iniquities put away from you in the years gone by? If so, again, this moment, touch this stringa childs finger can make it bring forth its musictouch it now! Say, Yes, concerning mercy, mercy to the very chief of sinners, my soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

VII. Time would fail us if we tried to dwell at any length upon these wondrous themes, so we pass to the next string, number seven, GODS IMMUTABILITY, because in the verse we have already touched upon, there are two notes. Mary said, His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He that had mercy in the days of Mary, has mercy todayfrom generation to generation, He is the same God. I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed. You that once delighted in the Lord, do not suppose that He has changed! He still invites you to come and delight in Him! He is Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever. What a poor foundation we would have for our hope if God could change! But He has confirmed His Word by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

The God of my grandfather, the God of my father, is my God this day the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the God of every Believer! He is the same God and is prepared to do the sameand to be the same to us as to them! Look back into your own experience. Have you not found God always the same? Come, protest against Him, if you have ever found Him to change! Is the Mercy Seat altered? Do the promises of God fail? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Will He no more be favorable? No, even if we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself! And when all things melt away, this one eternal Rock abides! Therefore, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. It is a blessed string to touch! If we had time, we would play upon it and evoke such harmonies as would make the angels want to join us in the chorus!

VIII. The next string which will awaken a responsive echo in your hearts is GODS POWER. He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. This string gives us deep bass music and requires a heavy hand to make it pour forth any melody. What wonders of power God has worked on the behalf of His people, from the days of Egypt, when the horse and his rider He cast into the Red Sea, even till now! How strong is His arm to defend His people!

In these days some of us have been driven to look to that power, for all other help has failed. You know how it was in the dark agesit seemed as if the darkness of popery would never be removedbut how soon it was gone when God called forth His men to bear witness to His Son! What reason we have to rejoice that He scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts! They thought that they could readily burn up the heretics and put an end to this Gospel of theirs, but they could not do it. And today there is a dark conspiracy to stamp out the evangelical faith. First, on the part of some who go after their superstitions, they set up the crucifix to hide the Cross and point men to sacraments instead of to the Savior.

And then, worse than these, are those who undermine our faith in Holy Scripturethey tear from the Book this chapter and that, deny this great Truth of God and the otherand try to bring the inventions of man into the place that ought to be occupied by the Truth of God. But the Lord lives! Jehovahs arm has not waxed short! Depend upon it, before many years have passed, He will take up the quarrel of His Covenant and will bring the old banner to the front again! We shall yet rejoice to hear the Gospel preached in the most plain terms, accentuated by the Holy Spirit, Himself, upon the hearts of His people. Let us touch this string again! The Almighty God is not dead! Behold, the Lords hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.

IX. The next string is one that some friends do not like. At least they do not say much about itit is DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY. Listen to it. You know how God thunders it out. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Gods will is supreme! Whatever the wills of men may be, God will not be driven from His Throne, nor will His scepter be made to quiver in His hands! After all the rebellious acts of men and devils, He will still be eternal and supreme, with His Kingdom ruling over all. And thus the virgin sings, 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. Who can speak the wonders of His Sovereign Grace? Was it not strange that He should ever have chosen you?

*What was there in you that could merit esteem, Or give the Creator delight?   
Twas even so, Father, you must ever sing, Because it seemed good in Your sight.*

Is it not strange that the Lord should not take the Kings and mighty ones, but should so order it, that the poor have the Gospel preached to them? God is King of kings and Lord of lordsand He acts like a king. He gives not account of any of His matters. But He lets us see right clearly that He has no respect to the greatness and fancied goodness of man that He does as He pleases and that He pleases to give His mercy to them that fear Him and bow before Him! He dispenses His favors to those who tremble at His Presence, who come humbly to His feet and take His mercy as a free giftwho look to His dear Son because they have nothing else to look to and, as poor, guilty worms, find in Christ their life, their wisdom, their righteousness, their all! Oh, the splendor of this great King!

X. The tenth string is GODS FAITHFULNESS. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever. God remembers what He has said. Take those three words, As He spoke. Whatever He said, though it was thousands of years ago, it stands fast forever and ever! God cannot lie. Beloved, are any of you in trouble? Search the Scriptures till you find a promise that suits your case. And when you get it, do not say, I hope that this is true. That is an insult to your God! Believe it, believe it up to the hilt! Do as I have seen boys do in the swimming holetake a header and go right into the stream of Gods mercy! Dive as deeply as you canthere is no drowning here! These are waters to swim in and the more you can lose yourself in this blessed crystal flood of promised mercy, the better it shall be! You shall rise up out of it as the sheep come from the washing! You shall feel refreshed beyond measure in having cast yourself upon God!

When Gods promises fail, let us know of it, for some of us have lived so long on those promises that we do not care to live on anything else! And if they can be proved to be false, we had better give up living altogether! But we delight to know that they are all absolutely truewhat God said to our fathers stands good to their childrenand will stand good even to the end of time and to all eternity.

If any of you have not been able to touch even one of these strings, I would bid you get to your knees and cry to God, and say, Why is it that I cannot magnify You, O Lord? I should not be surprised if you discovered the reason to be that you are so big, yourself. He never magnifies God who magnifies himself! Belittle yourself and magnify your God! Down with self to the lowest depths and up, higher and still higher, with your thoughts of God!

Poor Sinner, you that have not yet laid hold on God, there is sweet music even for you in the virgins song. Perhaps you are saying, I am nothing but a lump of sin and a heap of misery. Very well. Leave the lump of sin and the heap of misery and let Christ be your All-in-All! Give yourself up to Christ. He is a Saviorlet Him do His own business. If a man sets up to be a lawyer and I have a case in court, I should not think of giving him the case and then, afterwards, go into court and begin to meddle with it for myself! If I did, he would say, I must drop the case if you do not let it alone.

Sometimes the idea may come into your mind that you will do something towards saving yourself and have some share in the glory of your salvation. If you do not get rid of that idea, you will be lost! Surrender yourself to Christ and let Him save you! And then, afterwards, He will work in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure, while you shall make melody in your heart unto the Lordand from this harp of ten strings shall proceed such delightful music that many shall listen with such rapture that they shall go to your Master and take lessons in this heavenly music for themselves!

The Lord bless you, Beloved, and send you away happy in Him! **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONLuke 1:39-80.** HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK152, 775, 245.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:   
Mr. Spurgeon appeared to be rallying when the note for last weeks sermon was being written and that rallying continued for three or four days. Towards the end of the week, however, the inability to take food and the consequent weakness once more returned. No progress can, therefore, be reported in his general conditionthe serious malady from which he has been suffering remains much the same as it has been for many weeks. Readers of the sermons will see that the need for continued supplication is still as great as during any part of the past three months. Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon are deeply grateful for the widespread sympathy and prayer on their behalf and they join in intercession for the many friends who have been remembering them at the Throne of Grace.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2941 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

MARYS MAGNIFICAT   
NO. 2941

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 1905.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 22, 1875.

**And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.   
Luke 1:46, 47.**

MARYS Magnificat was a song of faith. You have thought, perhaps, that you could easily have sung this song if you had been as highly favored as she was, but are you sure that you could have done so? Have you ever realized the difficulties under which this hymn was composed and sung? If not, permit me to remind you that the wondrous birth which had been promised to her had not then been accomplished and in her mind there must have been a consciousness that many would doubt her statements. The visitation of the angel and all its consequences would seem to be ridiculous and even impossible to many to whom she might venture to mention the circumstancesno, more than thatwould subject her to many cruel insinuations which would scandalize her character! And that which conferred upon her the highest honor that ever fell to woman would, in the judgment of many, bring upon her the greatest possible dishonor. We know what suspicions even Joseph had and that it was only a Revelation from God that could remove them. Mary would have been sorely troubled if she had been influenced by her natural feelings and had been swayed by external circumstances.

It was only her wondrous faithin some respects, her matchless faith, for no other woman had ever had such a blessed trial of faith as she hadit was only her matchless faith that she should be the mother of the holy Child Jesus, that sustained her. Truly blessed was she in believing that and blessed, indeed, was she in that even before there was an accomplishment of the things that were told her by the angel, she could sing, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. Unbelief would have said, Wait. Fear would have said, Be silent. But faith could not wait and could not be silent! She must sing and sing she did most sweetly. I call your attention to this fact because when we ourselves have a song to sing unto the Lord, we may perhaps be tempted not to sing it till our hopes are accomplished and our faith has been exchanged for fact. Brothers and Sisters, if this is your case, do not wait, for your song will spoil if you do! There is another song to be sung for the accomplished mercy, but there is a song to be sung now for the

promised mercy! Therefore, let not the present hour lose the song which is due to it.

I am not going to expound the text so much as to ask you to practice it with me. So, first, let us sing. Secondly, let us sing after Marys manner. And, thirdly, let us sing with Marys purpose.

I. Firstly, then, LET US SING.   
Let us sing, first, because singing is the natural language of joy. Do not even the ungodly sing when their corn and wine increase? Have they not their harvest hymns and vintage songs? Do they not sing right merrily when they go forth to the dance? And if the wicked sing thus, shall the righteous be silent? Are the jubilant songs all made for the ungodly and the dirges for us? Are they to lift high the festive strain and we to be satisfied with the Dead March in Saul, or some such melancholy music as that? No, Brothers and Sisters, if they have joy, much more have we! Their joy is like the crackling of thorns under a pot, but ours is the shining of a star that shall never be quenched. Let us sing, then, for our joy abounds and abides. Therefore, Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. If the joy of the Lord is your strength, why not express it in holy song? Why should not your joys have a tongue as well as the joys of ungodly men? When warriors win victories, they shout. Have we won no victories through Jesus Christ our Lord? When men celebrate their festivals, they sing. Are there any festivals equal to ours our Paschal Supper, our passage of the Red Sea, our Jubilee, our expectation of the coronation of our King, our hymn of victory over all the hosts of Hell? Oh surely if the children of earth sing, the children of Heaven ought to sing far more often, far more loudly, far more harmoniously than they do! Come, then, let us sing because we are glad in the Lord!   
Let us sing, too, because singing is the language of Heaven. It is thus that they express themselves up yonder. Many of the songs and other sounds of earth never penetrate beyond the clouds. Sighs and groans and clamors have never reached those regions of serenity and purity! But they do sing there. Heaven is the home of sacred song and we are the children of Heaven. Heavens light is in us! Heavens smile is upon us! Heavens all belongs to us and, therefore   
*We would begin the music here,   
And so our souls should rise.   
Oh, for some Heavenly notes to bear   
Our passions to the skies!*   
The music of joy and the music of Heaven should often be upon our lips in the form of Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.  
Let us also sing because singing is sweet to the ears of God. I think I may venture to say that even the song of birds is sweet to Him, for in the 104th Psalm, where it is written, The Lord shall rejoice in His works, it is also mentioned that the birds sing among the branches. Is there anything sweeter in the world than to wake up, about four or five oclock in the morning, just at this time of the year and hear the birds singing as if they would burst their little throats and, pouring out in a kind of contest of sweetness, their little hearts in joyous song? I believe that in the wild places of the earth, where no human foot has ever defiled the soil, God loves to walk. When I have been alone among the fir trees, inhaling their sweet fragrance, or have wandered up the hill where the loudest voice could not be answered by another voice, for no man was there, I have felt that God was there and that He loved to listen to the song of birds that He had created. Yes, even the harshly croaking ravens He hears when they cry!   
I do not think that mere music is sweet to Gods ears when it comes from man in lewdness, attended with lascivious thoughts. And even sacred music which is sweet in itself, when used for mere amusement, must be an abomination to the Most High when it is so degraded. But He loves to hear us sing when we sing His praises from our hearts. Do you not delight to hear your own children sing and is there anything sweeter than a song from a child? At the Orphanage, the other day, they brought me a little boy who had just been taken in. I felt a special interest in him because his father had been a minister of the Gospel. They told him to sing to me and it was a very sweet songone of Mr. Sankeys hymns which came from his lips. His singing quite touched my heart. Had it been my own child, I do not doubt that it would have touched my heart still more! And God loves to hear His children sing. Even your discords, as long as they do not affect your heart, but are only of sound and not of soul, shall please Him. What a beautiful simile is used in the 22nd PsalmO You that inhabit the praises of Israel! Just as Gods ancient people, during the feast of tabernacles, dwelt under booths made from the branches of trees, so Jehovah is represented as having made for Himself a tabernacle out of the praises of His people! They are only like fading branches that soon turn brown, yet the great Lord of All condescends to sit beneath them and as we, each one, bring a new branch, plucked from the tree of Mercy, we help to make a new tabernacle for the Most High to dwell in!   
One reason why they sing in Heaven is because all there are seeking to please the heart of God. They sing not merely that they may practice Psalmody and have their voices in good order, or that they may interest the strangers who are constantly arriving from these nether lands, or even that they may please each other and delight the angels, but unto the Lord is their perpetual song, for He delights in it. Let us also sing unto Him as long as we live. Sometimes it would be well for us to make hymns, rather than to repress the making of them, as we often do. The Moravians were accustomed to gather up in their churches the very poorest rhymes and dibbles that were made by the brethrenand they used to shape them as best they could into something like a singable form. Their hymnbook has in it a great number of hymns that I should not like to hear you sing! But, for all that, I like the spirit that was in the early Moravians. Let us each one try to make a hymn, they said. Let us encourage one another to express some personal experience of our life, for we have each one of us had some special point of Gods Grace illustrated in us. I would that the men who can so well write popular songs and give to the people attractive words and tunes to sing in the street or in the home, would consecrate their talents to a better purpose by writing hymns and spiritual songs to the praise and glory of God. We would then be the richer in our Psalmody, as, indeed, we always are when God sends us a true revival of religion, for revivals of religion always bring with them new hymns and spiritual songs.   
But if we cannot ourselves compose hymns, let us sing those that somebody else has made and let us sing the right onesthose that suit us best. There are some hymns that I cannot sing at presentthey are too high for me, but I shall sing them, by-and-by. There are others that are too low for meI cannot get down to such depths of doubt and trembling as the poets seem to have been in when they composed them. Every Christian should have some particular hymn that he loves best, so that when his heart is merriest, he should sing that hymn. How many good old people I have known who used to sit and sing, or walk about the house, just humming or crooning   
*When I can read my title clear   
To mansions in the skies,   
I bid farewell to every fear,   
And wipe my weeping eyes.*   
Some have other favorites, but whatever our choice is, I think it is well to have a hymn which, although we have not ourselves written it, has, nevertheless, been made our own by our circumstances and experiences. When we have fixed on such a hymn as that, let us sing it unto the Lord again and again!   
Let us not be among these who make excuses for not singing. One says that he has no voice. Then, sing with your heart, Brother! Perhaps even your voice would improve if you used it more, but if there is such a grating noise about it that you dare not sing when another person is listening, get alone and sing to the Lord.   
Do not say that you are unable to sing because you are always in company. I would have you make it your general rule to sing in almost any company where your lot may be cast, though, sometimes it is not right to cast your pearls before swine. Watch your opportunity. If all in the room are silent, perhaps you had better be silent, too. But if one of your workfellows feels that he must sing a song and he has taken the liberty to do it, now is your turn and you may sing, too. I remember being on Mount St. Bernard, spending a night with the monks at the hospice. There was a piano which had been given by the Prince of Wales, and the different persons who were spending the night there, sang and played by turns. One sang a Spanish hymn and another a German hymn. And when it came to our turn, we sang   
*There is a fountain filled with blood   
Drawn from Immanuels veins.*   
And why should we not sing it? Had we not as much a right to sing as the other people had? Do not abate your rights and privileges, dear Friends, but if others sing, you sing, too, and never mind who listens! It will do no man any harm to hear the praises of the Lord!   
And do not say that you cannot sing because of your occupation! Your hands may be just as busy as usual even while the songs of Zion are rising from your lips. You may even be writing, or otherwise mentally occupied and yet, at the same time, your heart may be ascending to God in praise!   
Make no excuse because you are ill. Sometimes a little song between the sheets is very sweet in the ears of God, even though it has to be accompanied by sighs and groans. Pain makes every note come out with great effort, yet I believe God bends down His ears to hear such singing as that. I have known birds in cages sing better than those outsideand the Lord sometimes puts us in a cage on purpose that He may hear us sing the sweeter. He loves to hear His sick children sing His praises upon their beds and His high praises in the midst of the furnace of affliction. Are you very poor? Then sing from your heart to the Lord and your music shall be better than silver and gold unto God! Even death, itself, need not stay our songslet us sing right up to this side of the Glory gatethere is no fear about our keeping on with our song on the other side! As long as we can sing here, let us do so, praising the Lord right up to the last hour of our livesthen shall our voices be tuned immediately to noble songs, for in a moment, we shall

**Sing with rapture and surprise   
His loving-kindness in the skies!**   
II. Now, passing on to our second point, LET US SING AFTER MARYS MANNER, as far as that manner may be transferable to us. No bird ought to try to sing exactly like another. The blackbird ought not to imitate the thrush, nor the thrush the canarylet them all keep to their own notes and let each one of us sing his own song unto the Lord. Yet I think we shall see that there is something about Marys music that will suit us all.   
First, let us sing reverently. Mary was very joyful, but there was nothing in her song that would strike you as being irreverent, vulgar, or commonplace. I am not squeamish about music, but I must confess that I hardly like to hear the high praises of God sung to the tune of a comic song or of a dance. There is a certain congruity about things that must be observed and some good music may have associated with it such strange ideas that we had better let it alone till those associations have died out, lest, haply, while we are uttering holy words, some people may be reminded by the tune of unholy things! Mary sings very reverently and so should we. And though I like some of the new tunes very much and am glad that they are so popular, yet, for my own part, I like a good old Psalm tune much better. It seems to me like going away from the snows of Lebanon to seek after the stale cisterns of earth when we leave the old music, and the old hymns, and the old Psalms for any of your modern melodies. Still, if you can praise God better with the new songs, do so, but let it always be done reverently.   
But, secondly, Mary praised God with personal devotion. Notice how intensely personal her song is. Elizabeth is there, yet Mary sings as though she were all aloneMy soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. It seemed as though her song meant something like this, Elizabeth is glad, but I, Mary, am also glad, and I have a gladness which is all my own, which even Elizabeth cannot know. My soul does magnify the Lord. It ought to be so in our congregationswe should join with our fellow Christians in their songs of praise, but we must always mind that our personal note is not omittedMy soul does magnify the Lord. Do you not think that some of you too often forget this? You come to hear sermons and sometimes you do not come to the assembly as much as you ought for the purpose of directly and distinctly praising God in your own personality and individuality. The music is delightful to us as it rises from thousands of voices, but to God it can be pleasant only as it comes from each heart. My soulwhether other people are praising the Lord or notmy soulfor I have a personal indebtedness to You, my God, and there is a personal union between You and me. I love You and You love me and, therefore, even if all other souls are dumb, my soul does magnify the Lord. In this fashion, dear Brothers and Sisters, have a song to yourself and mind that it is thoroughly your own.   
Thirdly, in Marys song we see great spirituality. You observe how she puts this matter twice overMy soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. She is far from being content with mere lip service. Her language is poetic, but she is not satisfied with her language. I have no doubt that her voice was exceedingly sweet, but she does not say anything about that, but she does speak of, my soul, and, my spirit. O dear Friends, let us never be satisfied with any kind of worship which does not take up the whole of our inner and higher nature! It is what you are within, that you really are before the living God! And it is quite a secondary matter how loud the chant may be, or how sweet the tune of your hymn, or how delightfully you join in it unless your spirit, your soul, truly praises the Lord! You can sometimes do this in songs without wordsand he that has no voice for singing can, after this fashion, magnify the Lord with his soul and spirit.   
Mary also praised the Lord intelligently. Notice how she sings, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. You observe that she varies the names which she uses and she varies them with great propriety. She magnifies Jehovah. She makes Him great, which is the proper thing to do concerning Jehovah. But she rejoices in God, her Savior. In that aspect, her Lord comes nearer to her and becomes more immediately the object of joy to her, so she rejoices in God her Savior. She dwells first upon Jehovahs power to saveMy soul does magnify the Lord. Then she dwells upon His willingness to saveMy spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. She seems to see the two points the greatness and the goodness of the Lord Jehovah, yet her Savior. The Ruler and Lawgiver, yet the gracious One who pardons and blots out sin.   
Mary praised God enthusiastically, for the reduplication of the terms, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior, indicates the fervor and ardor of her praise. It is natural to us to repeat ourselves when we begin to glow with holy gladness, so Mary stays, My soul, my natural lifemy spirit, my newborn, my intense, diviner lifemy soul, my mind, my intellectmy spirit, my affections, my heart, my emotions, my entire being, my soul and spirit praise the Lord. She did not need to add that her body praised the Lord, for the very sound of her voice bore witness that her body was joining with her soul and spiritso that her triple nature was magnifying the Lord. There was enthusiasm in her song and if ever any of us ought to be stirred to the very depths of our spirit, it is when we are praising the Lord. Sing, Brothers and Sisters, sing sweetly, but sing loudly, too, unto God, your strength!   
Further, we may sing, as Mary did, Divinely. I mean, of course, with regard to the object of her song. So let it be with us. My soul does magnifya Doctrine? A church! A priest?God forbid! My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced inthe success of my pastors ministry? Yes, it may do so, but that is one of the inferior themes for joy. My spirit has rejoiced in my own success in casting out devils and working miracles? Yes, it may do that, but still, it would be better to rejoice that our names are written in Heaven. The subject of Marys joy is nothing low, nothing less than HeavenlyMy spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. If that is your declaration, you may well lift up your voice and sing  
*Go up, go up, my heart,   
Dwell with your God above.*   
Note, again, that Mary sang evangelically and we must mind that we always do the same, for I am afraid that there are some popular hymns which have something that is not Gospel in them. And whenever there is a hymn that has the slightest taint of that sort in it, we ought to abandon it forever, however sweet its poetry may be. Mary sings, My spirit does rejoice in God my Savior. She was no Socinian and she was no Romanistshe knew that she needed a Savior and that she needed a God for her Savior, so her spirit rejoiced in God, her Savior. When we reach the highest point in our devotions, we still need a Savior. I do not at all like the boastful talk about the higher life in which some people seem to revel. We cannot have too high a life, but, God be merciful to me a sinner, is about as big a prayer as I can manage at present. And often does my soul pray the dying thiefs prayer with such earnestness that his petition is forced to my lips, Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom. The place of the perfect does not suit me yet, at any rate, but the place of the publican and of the penitent more becomes me, as I think it does the most of us. Oh, yes, we still need a Savior! So, like Mary, we will sing about our Savior and even if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we cannot do without the blood of Jesus Christ constantly cleansing us from all sinfor we do still sin.   
Once more, Mary praised the Lord with assurance. It is a grand thing to be able to sing, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in Godwho will, I hope, and pray, and sometimes believe, be my Savior? I have spoilt the musichave I notby putting in those words of my own? It goes better as Mary sang it, My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. She was quite assured of that fact and had not any doubts or fears concerning it! It is well to get such a firm grip of the Savior that we rest in Him completely and so can sing to His praise. Oh! says one, I cannot praise Jesus as I would because of my sins. And I reply to that remarkBut my dear Friend, would you praise Him if you had no sins? Would He be needed by you and wanted by you then? Could He be of any use to you then? Would you feel any gratitude to Him? If you were not sinners, of what use would a Savior be to you? But we praise Him because though we are conscious of sin, we are equally conscious of cleansing in His precious blood! We take Him to be our Allin-All because we ourselves are nothing at all! If we had been of any account, He would have been just so much less, but, since we are nothing, there is the opportunity for Him to be All-in-All to us. Let us sing, then, to His praise! May God the Holy Spirit teach us to do so, even as He taught the Virgin Mary!   
III. Now, thirdly, and briefly, LET US SING WITH MARYS PURPOSE. That was twofoldMy soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.   
The first part of our PURPOSE, then, should be, Magnify the Lord. How can we do that? We cannot really make God great, though that is the meaning of the word. How, then, can we magnify Him?   
Well, first, let us think of His greatness. It will be really praising Him if we thus think of Him. You need not speak, but just ponder, weigh, consider, contemplate, meditate, ruminate upon the attributes of the Most High. Begin with His mercy if you cannot begin with His holiness, but take the attributes one by one and think about them. I do not know a single attribute of God which is not wonderfully quickening and powerful to a true Christian. As you think of any one of them, it will ravish you and carry you quite away. You will be lost in wonder, love and praise as you consider it. You will be astonished and amazed as you plunge into its wondrous depths and everything else will vanish from your vision. That is one way of making God greatby often thinking about Him!

The next way to make God great is by often drinking Him into yourself. The lilies stand and worship God simply by being beautifulby drinking in the sunlight which makes them so charming and the dewdrops which glisten upon them. Stand before the Lord and drink Him indo you understand what I mean by this expression? You go down to the seaside, when you are sickly, and you get out on a fine morning and there is a delightful breeze coming up from the sea. And you feel as if it came in at every pore of your body and you seem to be drinking in health at every breath you breathe! Do just like that in a spiritual sense with Godgo down to the great sea of Godheadmagnify it by thinking how great it is and then take it into your very soul. God cannot be greater than He is, but He can be greater in you than He is at present! He cannot increasethere cannot be more of God than there isbut there may be more of God in you. More of His great love, more of His perfect holiness, more of His Divine power may be manifested in you and more of His likeness and light may be revealed through you. Therefore, make Him great in that respect.   
And when you have done that, by His help, then try to make Him great by what you give forth, even as the rose, when she has satisfied herself with the sweet shower, no sooner does the clear shining come after the rain than she deluges the garden all around with her delicious perfume. Do you the samefirst drink in all you can of the Deity and then exhale Himbreathe out again, in your praise, in your holy living, in your prayers, in your earnest zeal, in your devout spirit, the God whom you have breathed in! You cannot make more of God than He is, but you can make God more consciously present to the minds of others and make them think more highly of God by what you say and what you do!   
I should like to be able to say, as long as I live, My soul does magnify the Lord. I should like to have this as the one motto of my life from this moment until I close my eyes in death, My soul does magnify the Lord. I would gladly preach that way! I would gladly eat and drink that way. I would even sleep that way, so that I could truthfully say, I have no wish but that God should be great, and that I should help to make Him great in the eyes of others. Will not you also, dear Friends, make this the motto of your life-Psalm?   
Then Mary added, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. Is there any true praise without joy? Is not praise twin brother to joy? And do not joy and praise always dwell together? Rejoice, then, Beloved, not in the scenes you see, for they are fleeting, but rejoice in your Saviorin Him above everything else! Never let any earthly thing or any human being stand higher in your joy then Jesus Christ of Nazareth! Rejoice in Him as most surely yours, for, dear Brothers and Sisters, as a Believer, Christ is yours. If you are resting in Him, He belongs to you, so rejoice in your own Savior, for all of Christ is yoursnot half a Savior, not one of His wounds for you and one for me, but all His wounds for you, and all for me! Not His thoughtful head for you, and His loving heart for me, but His head and His heart all for you and all for meHe is my Savior, He is your Saviorfrom His feet that were pierced by the nails to His head that was crowned with thorns!   
Oh, how we ought to rejoice in Him, whatever our union with Him may cost us! Mary did not know what that wondrous visitation would cost herand it was to cost her much, as Simeon said to herYes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also. But even though the sword must go through her soul, it mattered not to her, for unto her a Child was to be born, unto her a Son was to be given, who was to be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. So, if the fact that Christ is ours involves the bearing of the Cross, we are glad to bear it. It may involve suffering and shame and a thousand temptations and trialsif it is so, each true Believer can say with Mary, My spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviorin what He is, in what He is to me, in what He is to all His elect, in what He is to poor sinners, in what He is to God, in what He will be when He comes again and in what He will be throughout eternity. If a little bird has nothing else to do but sing, it has a great deal to do. And if you and I should have, tonight, when we get home, nothing to do but to praise the Lord, we have the best employment out of Heaven! We must not think that Christians are wasting time when they pray and praise. Some fussy folk seem to imagine that we must always be talking, or attending meetings, or giving away tracts. Well, do as much as you can of all good things, but still, there must be times for quiet meditation, times for reading, times for praying and times for praising. There is no waste about such things they are among the best spent hours that we ever have. To work is the stalk of the wheat, but to praise is the full corn in the ear. You and I, Beloved, are living to praise God. This is the culmination, the very apex of the pyramid of existence, pointing straight up to Heaventhat we praise God with all our heart and soul.   
So then, to conclude, here is something for every child of God to do. You can all magnify the Lord and you may all rejoice in Him. You cannot all preach. If you could, who would there be to hear you? If all were preachers, where would be the hearers? But you can all praise God. If there is any Brother or Sister here who has only one talent, let not such an one say, I cannot do anything. You can magnify the Lord and you can rejoice in Him! To be happy in Him is to praise God. The mere fact of our being happy in the Lord makes music in His ears. If you are one of His children, you can be happy in Him, so get out of those doleful dumps and cast out that spirit of murmuring and complaint which so often possesses you! Pray the Lord to help you shake off your natural tendency to look on the dark side of everything, and say, No, no, I must not do that. After all, I am not on the road to HellI am on the way to Heaven! And this world is the ante-room to Heaven, so my soul shall magnify the Lord and my spirit shall rejoice in God my Savior.   
I believe that if we could brighten the faces of all the saints and anoint them with the oil of gladness, we would do more than anything else could do to spread Christianity. I mean if we could make the children of the King rejoice, we should cause worldlings to ask, Where does this joy come from? And as they asked this question, we would give them the answer and so the Gospel would be sure to spread.   
My closing word is concerning those who cannot magnify the Lord and cannot rejoice in God their Savior, those who cannot sing to Gods praise and who never have any joy in the Lord. Then how can they be His children? God has many children and they have many infirmities, but He never yet had a dumb child. They can, every one, say, God be merciful to me a sinner, and they can all sing, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Prayer and praise are two of the sure signs of a true-born heir of Heaven. If you never praise God, my Friend, you can never go to Heaven. Till the Lord has taken out of you the praise of other things, the love of other things and given you the Grace to love Him and praise Him, you cannot enter into His Glory. May some poor soul here that has not anything for which it could praise itself, begin now to praise that God who freely forgives the greatest sin and who is willing to cleanse the very blackest sinner, for He has given Christ to die, the Just for the unjust, that He may bring them unto God! Oh, begin to magnify Him and rejoice in Him now, and you will never want to leave off doing so, world without end! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LUKE 1:39-56.**

Verses 39-41. And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. We do not read that Mary was filled with the Holy Spirit, possibly because she was always in that condition, living very near to God in hallowed fellowship. Some of us have occasional fillings with the Holy Spirit, but blessed are they who dwell in Him, having been baptized into Him and enjoying continual nearness to God as the blessed result.

42, 43. And she spoke out with a loud voice and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Those who are most holy are most humble. You will always find those two things go together. Elizabeth was the older woman, but, inasmuch as Mary was more highly favored than she was, she asked, Why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should some to me? Genuine Christians do not exalt themselves above their fellow Believers, but they have a selfdepreciatory spirit and each one esteems others better than himself.

44, 45. For, lo, as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. What a benediction that is! If any of us truly believe Gods Word, we are blessed from that very fact, for Gods promise never misses its due performance. Men find it convenient to forget their promises, but God never forgetsHe takes as much delight in keeping His promise as He does in making it.

46. And Mary said. We do not read that she spoke with a loud voice. Occasionally, the visitation of the Spirit causes excitement. Thus Elizabeth spoke with a loud voice, but Mary, though full of a rapturous joy, spoke calmly and quietly, in a royal tone of holy calm. Mary said

46. My soul does magnify the Lord. She was weary, for she had come a long journey, but she was like Abrahams servant who said, I will not eat until I have told my errand. So Mary will not eat until she has sung the praises of her God! My soul does magnify the Lord.

47, 48. And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Some have done so to the grief of genuine Christians, for they have apostatized from the faith and made Mary into a kind of goddess and, therefore, Protestant Christians have gone to the other extreme and have not always given her the respect which is due her.

49, 50. For He that is mighty has done to me great things, and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. Notice how Mary quotes Scripture. Her mind seems to have been saturated with the Word of God, as though she had learned the Books of Scripture through and had them by heart in more senses than one. And it in significant that though the Holy Spirit was speaking by her, yet even He quoted the older Scriptures in preference to uttering new sentences. What honor He put upon the Old Testament by so continually quoting it in the New Testament, even as the Lord Jesus also did. Let us, too, prize every part of Gods Word. Let us soak in it till we are saturated with Scriptural expressions! We cannot find any better ones, for there are none.

51-53. He has showed strength with His arm, He has scattered the proud in the imagination of the hearts. 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 away empty. Marys song reminds us of the Song of Hannah, yet there is a different tone in it. Hannahs has more of exultation over enemies cast down, but Marys is more becoming to the new dispensation as Hannahs was to the old. There is a gentle quietness of tone about the Magnificat all through, yet even Mary cannot help rejoicing that the Lord has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty.

54-56. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to His seed forever. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house. Wondrous as her future was to be, she would not neglect the duties of her home. When any of you are privileged to share high spiritual enjoyments, mind that you always return to your own home fit for your domestic duties. We read that David, after he had danced before the Ark, returned to bless his household. We must never set up Gods altar in opposition to the lawful duties of our home. The two together will make us strong for service and enable us to glorify the name of the Lord!

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MARYS SONG   
NO. 606

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 25, 1864, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.   
Luke 1:46, 47.**

MARY was on a visit when she expressed her joy in the language of this noble song. It were well if all our social communion were as useful to our hearts as this visit was to Mary. Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend. Mary, full of faith, goes to see Elizabeth, who is also full of holy confidence and the two are not long together before their faith mounts to full assurance and their full assurance bursts forth in a torrent of sacred praise!

This praise aroused their slumbering powers and instead of two ordinary village women, we see before us two prophetesses and poetesses upon whom the Spirit of God abundantly rested. When we meet with our kinsfolk and acquaintance, let it be our prayer to God that our communion may be not only pleasant, but profitable. Let us pray that we may not merely pass away time and spend a pleasant hour, but may advance a days march nearer Heaven and acquire greater fitness for our eternal rest!

Observe, this morning, the sacred joy of Mary that you may imitate it. This is a season when all men expect us to be joyous. We compliment each other with the desire that we may have a Merry Christmas. Some Christians who are a little squeamish do not like the word merry. It is a right good old Saxon word, having the joy of childhood and the mirth of manhood in it. It brings before ones mind the old song of the midnight peal of bells, the holly and the blazing log.

I love it for its place in that most tender of all parables, where it is written, that, when the long-lost prodigal returned to his father safe and sound, They began to be merry. This is the season when we are expected to be happy. And my hearts desire is that in the highest and best sense, you who are Believers may be merry.

Marys heart was merry within herbut here was the mark of her joy it was all holy merriment, it was every drop of it sacred mirth. It was not such merriment as worldlings will revel in today and tomorrow, but such merriment as the angels have around the Throne of God, where they sing, Glory to God in the highest, while we sing, On earth peace, goodwill towards men. Such merry hearts have a continual feast.

I want you, you children of the bride-chamber, to possess today and tomorrow, yes, all your days, the high and consecrated bliss of Mary that you may not only read her words but use them for yourselves, ever experiencing their meaningMy soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. Observe, first, that she sings. Secondly, she

sings sweetly. Thirdly, shall she sing alone?   
I. First observe that MARY SINGS. Her subject is a Savior. She hails the   
Incarnate God. The long expected Messiah is about to appear. He for  
whom Prophets and princes waited long is now about to cometo be born   
of the virgin of Nazareth. Truly there was never a subject of sweeter song  
than thisthe stooping down of Godhead to the feebleness of manhood!   
When God manifested His power in the works of His hands the morning   
stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy. But when God   
manifests Himself, what music shall suffice for the grand Psalm of adoring   
wonder?   
When wisdom and power are seen, these are but attributes. But in the   
Incarnation it is the Divine Person which is revealed wrapped in a veil of  
our inferior claywell might Mary sing when earth and Heaven even now  
are wondering at the condescending Grace! Worthy of peerless music is   
the fact that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. There is no  
longer a great gulf fixed between God and His people. The humanity of   
Christ has bridged it over. We can no more think that God sits on high indifferent to the wants and woes of menfor God has visited us and come   
down to the lowliness of our estate.   
We no longer need bemoan that we can never participate in the moral  
glory and purity of God, for if God in Glory can come down to His sinful   
creature, it is certainly less difficult to bear that creature, blood-washed   
and purified, up that starry way that the redeemed one may sit down forever on His Throne. Let us dream no longer in somber sadness that we   
cannot draw near to God so that He will really hear our prayer and pity  
our necessities seeing that Jesus has become bone of our bone and flesh  
of our flesh! He was born a babe as we are born, living a man as we must  
live, bearing the same infirmities and sorrows and bowing His head to the   
same death.   
O, can we not come with boldness by this new and living way and have   
access to the Throne of the heavenly Grace, when Jesus meets us as Immanuel, God with us? Angels sung, they scarcely knew why. Could they  
understand why God had become Man? They must have known that here  
was a mystery of condescension. But all the loving consequences which  
the Incarnation involved, even their acute minds could scarcely have   
guessed!  
But we see the whole and comprehend the grand design most fully. The   
manger of Bethlehem was big with Gloryin the Incarnation was wrapped   
up all the blessedness by which a soul, snatched from the depths of sin, is  
lifted up to the heights of Glory. Shall not our clearer knowledge lead us   
to heights of song which angelic guesses could not reach? Shall the lips of   
cherubs move to flaming sonnets and shall we, who are redeemed by the   
blood of the Incarnate God, be treacherously and ungratefully silent? *Did archangels sing Your coming?   
Did the shepherds learn their ways?   
Shame would cover me ungrateful,   
Should my tongues refuse to praise.*

This, however, was not the full subject of her holy hymn. Her peculiar delight was not that there was a Savior to be born, but that He was to be born of her! Blessed among women was she and highly favored of the Lord. But we can enjoy the same favorno, we must enjoy itor the coming of a Savior will be of no benefit to us. Christ on Calvary, I know, takes away the sin of His people. But none would have ever known the virtue of Christ upon the Cross unless they have the Lord Jesus formed in them as the hope of Glory!

The stress of the virgins canticle is laid upon Gods special Grace to her. Those little words, the personal pronouns, tell us that it was truly a personal affair with her. My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. The Savior was peculiarly and in a special sense, hers. She sung no Christ for all, but Christ for me, as her glad subject! Beloved, is Christ Jesus in your heart? Once you looked at Him from a distance and that look cured you of all spiritual diseases, but are you now living upon Him, receiving Him into your very vitals as your spiritual meat and drink?

In holy fellowship you have oftentimes fed upon His flesh and been made to drink of His blood. You have been buried with Him in Baptism unto death. You have yielded yourselves a sacrifice to Him and you have taken Him to be a sacrifice for you. You can sing of Him as the spouse did, His left hand is under my head and His right hand does embrace me. . . My beloved is mine and I am His: He feeds among the lilies.

This is a happy style of living and anything short of this poor slavish work, oh, you can never know the joy of Mary unless Christ becomes truly and really yours! But oh, when He is yours, yours within, reigning in your heart! Yours controlling all your passions! Yours changing your nature, subduing your corruptions, inspiring you with hallowed emotions! When He is yours within, a joy unspeakable and full of Gloryoh, then you can sing, you must singwho can restrain your tongue? If all the scoffers and mockers upon earth should bid you hold your peace, you must singyour spirit must rejoice in God your Savior!

We should miss much instruction if we overlooked the fact that the choice poem before us is a hymn of faith. As yet there was no Savior born, nor, as far as we can judge had the virgin any evidence such as carnal sense required to make her believe that a Savior would be born of her. How can this thing be, was a question which might very naturally have suspended her song until it received an answer convincing to flesh and blood. But no such answer had been given. She knew that with God all things are possible. She had His promise delivered by an angel and this was enough for heron the strength of the Word which came forth from God her heart leaped with pleasure and her tongue glorified His name! When I consider what it is which she believed and how unhesitatingly she received the Word, I am ready to give her, as a woman, a place almost as high as that which Abraham occupied as a man!

And if I dare not call her the mother of the faithful, at least let her have due honor as one of the most excellent of the mothers in Israel. The benediction of Elizabeth, Mary right well deserved, Blessed is she that believes. To her the substance of things hoped for was her faith and that was also her evidence of things not seen. She knew, by the Revelation of

God, that she was to bear the promised Seed who should bruise the serpents head. But other proof she had none.

This day there are those among us who have little or no conscious enjoyment of the Saviors Presence. They walk in darkness and see no light. They are groaning over inbred sin and mourning because corruptions prevail. Let them now trust in the Lord and remember that if they believe on the Son of God, Christ Jesus is within them. And by faith they may right gloriously chant the hallelujah of adoring love. Though the sun gleam not forth today, the clouds and mists have not quenched his light.

And though the Sun of Righteousness shines not on you at this instant, yet He keeps His place in yonder skies and knows no variableness, neither shadow of a turning. If with all your digging the well springs not up, yet there abides a constant fullness in that deep which crouches beneath in the heart and purpose of a God of Love. What, if like David, you are much cast down, yet like he can you say unto your soul, Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.

Be glad then with Marys joyit is the joy of a Savior completely hers but evidenced to be so, not by sense, but by faith. Faith has its music as well as sense, but it is of a more Divine sortif the food on the table make men sing and dance, feastings of a more refined and ethereal nature can fill Believers with a hallowed plenitude of delight! Still listening to the favored virgins canticle, let me observe that her lowliness does not make her stay her song. No, it imports a sweeter note into itFor He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden.

Beloved Friend, you are feeling more intensely than ever the depth of your natural depravity. You are humbled under a sense of your many failings. You are so dead and earth-bound even in this House of Prayer that you cannot rise to God. You are heavy and sad, even while our Christmas carols have been ringing in your ears. You feel yourself to be today so useless to the Church of God, so insignificant, so utterly unworthy, that your unbelief whispers, Surely, surely, you have nothing to sing for.

Come, my Brother, come my Sister, imitate this blessed virgin of Nazareth and turn that very lowliness and meanness which you so painfully feel into another reason for unceasing praise! Daughters of Zion, sweetly say in your hymns of love, He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. The less worthy I am of His favors, the more sweetly will I sing of His Grace! What if I am the most insignificant of all His chosen? Then will I praise Him who with eyes of love has sought me out and set His love upon me. I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that while You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, You have revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

I am sure, dear Friends, the remembrance that there is a Savior and that this Savior is yours, must make you sing. And if you set side by side with it the thought that you were once sinful, unclean, vile, hateful and an enemy to Godthen your notes will take yet a loftier flight and mount to the third heavens to teach the golden harps the praise of God!

It is right well worthy of notice that the greatness of the promised blessing did not give the sweet songster an argument for suspending her thankful strain. When I meditate upon the great goodness of God in loving His people before the earth was, in laying down His life for us, in pleading our cause before the Eternal Throne, in providing a paradise of rest for us foreverthe black thought has troubled meSurely this is too high a privilege for such an insect of a day as this poor creature, man.

Mary did not look at this matter unbelievinglyalthough she appreciated the greatness of the favorshe did but rejoice the more heartily on that account. For He that is mighty has done to me great things. Come, Soul, it is a great thing to be a child of God, and your God does great wonderstherefore be not staggered through unbeliefbut triumph in your adoption, great mercy though it is. Oh, it is a mighty mercy, higher than the mountains, to be chosen of God from all eternity, but it is true that even so are His redeemed chosen and therefore sing of it!

It is a deep and unspeakable blessing to be redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, but you are so redeemed beyond all question. Therefore doubt not, but shout aloud for gladness of heart! It is a rapturous thought that you shall dwell above and wear the crown and wave the palm branch forever. Let no mistrust interrupt the melody of your Psalm of expectation, but

*Loud to the praise of love Divine,   
Bid every string awake.*

What a fullness of the Truth of God is there in these few wordsHe that is mighty has done to me great things. It is a text from which a glorified spirit in Heaven might preach an endless sermon!

I pray you, lay hold upon the thoughts which I have in this poor way suggested to you and try to reach where Mary stood in holy exultation. The Grace is great, but so is its Giver. The love is infinite, but so is the heart from which it wells up. The blessedness is unspeakable, but so is the Divine Wisdom which planned it from of old. Let our hearts take up the Virgins Magnificat and praise the Lord right joyously at this hour.

Still further, for we have not exhausted the strain, the holiness of God has sometimes dampened the ardor of the Believers joy. But not so in Marys case. She exults in itAnd holy is His name. She weaves even that bright attribute into her song. Holy Lord! When I forget my Savior, the thought of Your purity makes me shudder! Standing where Moses stood upon the holy mountain of Your law, I do exceedingly fear and quake. To me, conscious of my guilt, no thunder could be more dreadful than the seraphs hymn of, Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Sabaoth. What is Your holiness but a consuming fire which must utterly destroy mea sinner?

If the heavens are not pure in Your sight and You charged your angels with folly, how much less, then, can You bear with vain, rebellious man that is born of woman? How can man be pure and how can Your eyes look upon him without consuming him quickly in Your anger? But, O Holy One of Israel, when my spirit can stand on Calvary and see Your holiness vindicate itself in the wounds of the Man who was born at Bethlehem, then my spirit rejoices in that glorious holiness which was once her terror!

Did the thrice holy God stoop down to man and take mans flesh? Then there is hope, indeed! Did a holy God bear the sentence which His own

Law pronounced on man? Does that holy God Incarnate now spread His wounded hands and plead for me? Then, my Soul, the holiness of God shall be a consolation to you. Living waters from this sacred well I draw. And I will add to all my notes of joy this one, and holy is His name. He has sworn by His holiness and He will not lie. He will keep His Covenant with His Anointed and His seed forever.

When we take to ourselves the wings of eagles and mount towards Heaven in holy praise, the prospect widens beneath useven so as Mary poises herself upon the poetic wings, she looks down the long aisles of the past and beholds the mighty acts of Jehovah in the ages long back. Mark how her strain gathers majesty. It is rather the sustained flight of the eagle-winged Ezekiel, than the flutter of the timid dove of Nazareth.

She sings, His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. She looks beyond the captivity to the days of the kingsto Solomon, to Davidalong through the Judges into the wilderness, across the Red Sea to Jacob, to Isaac, to Abraham and onward, till, pausing at the gate of Eden, she hears the sound of the promise, The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpents head. How magnificently she sums up the book of the wars of the Lord and rehearses the triumphs of Jehovah, He has showed strength with His arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

How delightfully is mercy intermingled with judgment in the next canto of her PsalmHe 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. My Brothers and Sisters, let us, too, sing of the past, glorious in faithfulness, fearful in judgment, teeming with wonders! Our own lives shall furnish us with a hymn of adoration. Let us speak of the things which we have made touching the King.

We were hungry and He filled us with good things. We crouched upon the dunghill with the beggar and He has enthroned us among princes. We have been tossed with tempest, but with the Eternal Pilot at the helm, we have known no fear of shipwreck. We have been cast into the burning fiery furnace, but the Presence of the Son of Man has quenched the violence of the flames. Proclaim to all, O you daughters of music, the long tale of the mercy of the Lord to His people in the generations long departed!

Many waters could not quench His love, neither could the floods drown it! Persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, swordnone of these have separated the saints from the love of God which is in Christ our Lord. The saints beneath the wings of the Most High have been ever safe! When most molested by the enemy they have dwelt in perfect peaceGod is their refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Plowing at times the blood red wave, the ship of the Church has never swerved from her predestined path of progress. Every tempest has favored herthe hurricane which sought her ruin has been made to bear her the more swiftly onward. Her flag has braved, these 1800 years, the battle and the breeze and she fears not what may yet be before her. But, lo, she nears the haven! The day is dawning when she shall bid farewell to storms. The waves already grow calm beneath her. The long-promised rest is near at handher Jesus Himself meets herwalking upon the waters!

She shall enter into her eternal haven and all who are on board shall, with their Captain, sing of joy and triumph and victory through Him who has loved her and been her Deliverer! When Mary thus tuned her heart to glory in her God for His wonders in the past, she particularly dwelt upon the note of election. The highest note in the scale of my praise is reached when my soul sings, I love Him because He first loved me. Well does Kent put it

*A monument of Grace,   
A sinner saved by blood.   
The streams of love I trace,   
Up to the fountain, God.   
And in His mighty breast I see,   
Eternal thoughts of love to me.*

We can scarcely fly higher than the source of love in the mount of God. Mary has the doctrine of election in her songHe 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. Here is distinguishing Grace, discriminating regard! Here are some suffered to perish! Here are others, the least deserving and the most obscure, made the special objects of Divine affection! Do not be afraid to dwell upon this high doctrine, Beloved in the Lord. Let me assure you that when your mind is most heavy and depressed you will find this to be a bottle of richest cordial.

Those who doubt these doctrines, or who cast them into the cold shade, miss the richest clusters of Eshcol. They lose the wines on the lees well refined, the fat things full of marrow. But you who by reason of years have had your senses exercised to discern between good and evilyou know that there is no honey like thisno sweetness comparable to it! If the honey in Jonathans woods when but touched, enlightened the eyes to see, this is honey that will enlighten your heart to love and learn the mysteries of the kingdom of God!

Eat and fear not overindulgence! Live upon this choice dainty and fear not that you shall grow weary of it for the more you know, the more you will want to know. The more your soul is filled, the more you will desire to have your mind enlarged that you may comprehend more and more the eternal, everlasting, discriminating love of God!

But one more remark upon this point. You perceive she does not finish her song till she has reached the Covenant. When you mount as high as election, tarry on its sister mount, the Covenant of Grace. In the last verse of her song, she sings, As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever. To her, that was the Covenant. To us who have clearer light, the ancient Covenant made in the council chamber of eternity is the subject of the greatest delight. The Covenant with Abraham was in its best sense only a minor copy of that gracious Covenant made with Jesus, the Everlasting Father of the faithful, before the blue heavens were stretched abroad.   
Covenant engagements are the softest pillows for an aching head.

Covenant engagements with the Surety, Christ Jesus, are the best props for a trembling spirit!   
*His oath, His Covenant, His blood,   
Support me in the raging flood.   
When every earthly prop gives way,   
This still is all my strength and stay.*   
If Christ did swear to bring me to Glory and if the Father swore that He would give me to the Son to be a part of the infinite reward for the travail of His soul, then, my Soul, till God Himself shall be unfaithful, till Christ shall cease to be the Truth, till Gods eternal council shall become a lie and the red roll of His election shall be consumed with fire, you are safe! Rest, then, in perfect peace, come what will! Take your harp from the willows and never let your fingers cease to sweep it to strains of richest harmony. O for Grace from first to last to join the Virgin in her song! II. Secondly, SHE SINGS SWEETLY. She praises her God right heartily. Observe how she plunges into the midst of the subject. There is no preface, but My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. When some people sing, they appear to be afraid of being heard. Our poet puts it  
*With all my powers of heart and tongue   
Ill praise my Maker in my song.   
Angels shall hear the notes I raise,   
Approve the song and join the praise.*   
I am afraid angels frequently do not hear those poor, feeble, dying whispers which often drop from our lips merely by force of custom. Mary is all heart! Evidently her soul is on fire! While she muses, the fire burns. Then she speaks with her tongue. May we, too, call home our wandering thoughts and wake up our slumbering powers to praise redeeming love. It is a noble word that she uses hereMy soul does magnify the Lord. I suppose it means, My soul does endeavor to make God great by praising Him. He is as great as He can be in His Beingmy goodness cannot extend to Him. But yet my soul would make God greater in the thoughts of others and greater in my own heart.   
I would give the train of His Glory a wider sweep. The light which He has given me I would reflect. I would make His enemies His friends. I would turn hard thoughts of God into thoughts of love. My soul would magnify the Lord. Old Trapp says, My soul would make greater room for Him. It is as if she wanted to get more of God into her, like Rutherford, when he says, Oh, that my heart were as big as Heaven, that I might hold Christ in it, and then he stops himselfBut Heaven and earth cannot contain Him. Oh, that I had a heart as big as seven heavens, that I might hold the whole of Christ within it.   
Truly this is a larger desire than we can ever hope to have gratified! Yet still our lips shall sing, My soul does magnify the Lord. Oh, if I could crown Him! If I could lift Him higher! If my burning at the stake would but add a spark more light to His Glory, happy would I be to suffer! If my being crushed would lift Jesus an inch higher, happy were the destruction which should add to His Glory! Such is the hearty spirit of Marys song! Again, her praise is very joyfulMy spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. The word in the Greek is a remarkable one. I believe it is the same word which is used in the passage, Rejoice you in that day and leap for joy. We used to have an old word in English which described a certain exulting dance, a galliard. That word is supposed to have come from the Greek word used here. It was a sort of leaping dance. The old commentators call it a levalto. Mary, in effect, declares, My spirit shall dance like David before the ark, shall leap, shall spring, shall hound, shall rejoice in God my Savior.   
When we praise God it ought not to be with dolorous and doleful notes. Some of my Brethren praise God always on the minor key, or in the deep, deep bassthey cannot feel holy till they have the horrors. Why cannot some men worship God except with a long face? I know them by their very walk as they come to worshipwhat a dreary pace it is! How solemnly proper and funereal, indeed! They do not understand Davids Psalm   
*Up to her courts with joys unknown,   
The sacred tribes repair.*   
No, they come up to their Fathers house as if they were going to jail and worship God on Sunday as if it were the most doleful day in the week! It is said of a certain Highlander, when the Highlanders were very pious, that he once went to Edinburgh and when he came back again he said he had seen a dreadful sight on Sundayhe had seen people at Edinburgh going to Church with happy faces! He thought it wicked to look happy on Sundayand that same notion exists in the minds of certain good people hereabouts. They fancy that when the saints get together they should sit down and have a little comfortable misery but little delight. In truth, moaning and pining is not the appointed way for worshipping God. We should take Mary as a pattern. All the year round I recommend her as an example to fainthearted and troubled ones. My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. Cease from rejoicing in sensual things and with sinful pleasures have no fellowshipfor all such rejoicing is evilbut you cannot rejoice too much in the Lord! I believe that the fault with our public worship is that we are too sober, too cold, too formal. I do not exactly admire the ravings of our Primitive-Methodist friends when they grow wild. But I should have no objection to hear a hearty, Hallelujah! now and then.   
An enthusiastic burst of exultation might warm our hearts. The shout of Glory! might fire our spirits. This I knowI never feel more ready for true worship than when I am preaching in Waleswhen the throughout whole sermon, the preacher is aided rather than interrupted by shouts of Glory to God! and Bless His name! Why, then, ones blood begins to glow and ones soul is stirred up! This is the true way of serving God with joy! Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say, Rejoice. My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

She sings sweetly, in the third place, because she sings confidently. She does not pause while she sings to questions herself, Have I any right to sing? but no, My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. IF is a sad enemy to all Christian happinessbut, perhaps, doubt, surmise, suspicionthese are a race of highwaymen who waylay poor timid pilgrims and steal their spending money! Harps soon get out of tune and when the wind blows from the doubting quarter, the strings snap by the wholesale.   
If the angels of Heaven could have a doubt, it would turn Heaven into Hell. If you are the Son of God, was the dastardly weapon wielded by the old enemy against our Lord in the wilderness. Our great foe knows well what weapon is the most dangerous. Christian, put up the shield of faith whenever you see that poisoned dagger about to be used against you! I fear that some of you foster your doubts and fears. You might as well hatch young vipers and foster the cockatrice. You think that it is a sign of Divine Grace to have doubts, whereas it is a sign of infirmity! It does not prove that you have no Grace when you doubt Gods promise, but it does prove that you need morefor if you had more Grace, you would take Gods Word as He gives it and it would be said of you as of Abraham, that, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform. God help you to shake off your doubts! Oh, these are devilish things! Is that too hard a word? I wish I could find a harder! These are felons. These are rebels, who seek to rob Christ of His Glory. These are traitors who cast mire upon the escutcheon of my Lord. Oh, these are vile traitorshang them on a gallows, high as Hamanscast them to the earth and let them rot like carrion, or bury them with the burial of an ass. Abhorred of God are doubtsabhorred of men let them be! They are cruel enemies to your souls! They injure your usefulness, they despoil you in every way. Smite them with the sword of the Lord and of Gideon! By faith in the promise seek to drive out these Canaanites and possess the land. O you men of God, speak with confidence and sing with sacred joy!   
There is something more than confidence in her song. She sings with great familiarity, My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He that is mighty has done to me great things. And holy is His name. It is the song of one who draws very near to her God in loving intimacy. I always have an idea, when I listen to the reading of the Liturgy, that it is a slaves worship. I do not find fault with its words or sentences, perhaps of all human compositions the Liturgical service of the Church of England is, with some exceptions, the noblest. But it is only fit for slaves, or at the best for subjects. The whole service through one feels that there is a boundary set round about the mountain, just as at Sinai. Its Litany is the wail of a sinner and not the happy triumph of a saint! The service genders unto bondage and has nothing in it of the confident spirit of adoption. It views the Lord afar off, as One to be feared rather than loved and to be dreaded rather than delighted in. I have no doubt it suits those whose experience leads them to put the Ten Commandments near the communion table for they hereby evidence that their dealings with God are still on the terms of servants and not of sons. For my own part I want a form of worship in which I may draw near to my God and come even to His feet, spreading my case before Him and ordering my cause with argumentstalking with Him as a friend talks with his friend, or a child with its fatherotherwise the worship is of little worth to me. Our Episcopalian friends, when they come here, are naturally struck with our service as being irreverent because it is so much more familiar and bold than theirs. Let us carefully guard against really deserving such a criticism and then we need not fear it. A renewed soul yearns after that very communion which the formalist calls irreverent! To talk with God as my Fatherto deal with Him as with one whose promises are true to me and to whom I, a sinner washed in blood and clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ may come with boldness, not standing afar offI say this is a thing which the outer-court worshipper cannot understand. There are some of our hymns which speak of Christ with such familiarity that the cold critic says, I do not like such expressions, I could not sing them. I quite agree with you, Sir Critic, that the language would not befit you, a stranger.   
But a child may say a thousand things which a servant must not. I remember a minister altering one of our hymns   
*Let those refuse to sing   
Who never knew our God.   
But favorites of the heavenly King   
May speak their joys abroad.*   
He sung itBut subjects of the heavenly King. Yes. And when he sang it, I thought, That is right. You are singing what you feelyou know nothing of discriminating Grace and special manifestations and therefore you keep to your native level, subjects of the heavenly King. But oh, my heart wants a worship in which I can feel and express the feeling that I am a favorite of the heavenly king and therefore can sing His special love, His manifested favor, His sweet relationships, His mysterious union with my soul!   
You never get right till you ask the question, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us and not unto the world? There is a secret which is revealed to us and not to the outside worldan understanding which the sheep receive and not the goats. I appeal to any of you who during the week are in an official positiona judge, for instance. You have a seat on the bench and you wear no small dignity when you are there. When you get home there is a little fellow who has very little fear of Your Judgeship, but much love for your person! He climbs your knee. He kisses your cheek and says a thousand things to you which are meet and right enough as they come from himbut which you would not tolerate in court from any living man.   
The parable needs no interpretation. When I read some of the prayers of Martin Luther they shock me, but I argue with myself thusIt is true I cannot talk to God in the same way as Martin, but then perhaps Martin Luther felt and realized his adoption more than I do and therefore was not less humble because he was more bold. It may be that he used expressions which would be out of place in the mouth of any man who had not known the Lord as he had.   
Oh my Friends, sing this day of our Lord Jesus as One near to us! Get close to Christ! Read His wounds! Thrust your hand into His side! Put your finger into the print of the nails and then your song shall win a sacred softness and melody not to be gained elsewhere. I must close by observing that while her song was all this, yet how very humble it was and how full of gratitude. The Papist calls her, Mother of God, but she never whispers such a thing in her song. No, it is God my Savior, just such words as the sinner who is speaking to you might use, and such expressions as you sinners who are hearing me can use, too.   
She needs a Savior. She feels it. Her soul rejoices because there is a Savior for her. She does not talk as though she could commend herself to Him, but she hopes to stand accepted in the Beloved. Let us, then, take care that our familiarity has always blended with it the lowliest prostration of spirit when we remember that He is God over all, blessed forever and we are nothing but dust and ashes! He fills all things and we are less than nothing and vanity.   
III. The last thing was to be SHALL SHE SING ALONE? Yes, she must, if the only music we can bring is that of carnal delights and worldly pleasures. There will be much music tomorrow which would not chime in with hers. There will be much mirth tomorrow and much laughter and I am afraid the most of it would not accord with Marys song. It will not be, My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.   
We would not stop the play of the animal spirits in young or old. We would not abate one jot of your relish of the mercies of God, so long as you break not His command by wantonness, or drunkenness, or excess but still, when you have had the most of this bodily exercise, it profits littleit is only the joy of the fleeting hour and not the happiness of the spirit which abides. And therefore Mary must sing alone, as far as you are concerned.   
The joy of the table is too low for Mary. The joy of the feast and the family grovels when compared with hers, but shall she sing alone? Certainly not, if this day any of us by simple trust in Jesus can take Christ to be our own! Does the Spirit of God this day lead you to say, I trust my soul on Jesus? My dear Friend, then you have conceived Christafter the mystical and best sense of that wordChrist Jesus is conceived in your soul! Do you understand Him as the Sin-Bearer, taking away transgression? Can you see Him bleeding as the Substitute for men?   
Do you accept Him as such? Does your faith put all her dependence upon what He did, upon what He is, upon what He does? Then Christ is conceived in you and you may go your way with all the joy that Mary knew! And I was half ready to say, with something morefor the natural conception of the Saviors holy body was not one-tenth so meet a theme for congratulation as the spiritual conception of the holy Jesus within your heart when He shall be in you the Hope of Glory.   
My dear Friend, if Christ is yours, there is no song on earth too high or too holy for you to sing! No, there is no song which thrills from angelic lips, no note which thrills Archangels tongues in which you may not join! Even this day the holiest, the happiest, the most glorious of words and thoughts and emotions belong to you. Use them! God help you to enjoy them. And His be the praise, while yours is the comfort evermore. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2582 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

ALTO AND BASS   
NO. 2582

A SERMON   
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, AUGUST 7, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, APRIL 1, 1883.

**He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty.   
Luke 1:53.**

THIS song of Mary is full of sweet Gospel teaching. She was evidently a woman well instructed in Divine Truth and, though but young in years, she must have been deeply experienced in the things of God. Notice how she casts the Truth of God into the form of songthere is a wisdom in this, for we are to teach and admonish one another, in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. Truth is never more likely to abide in the memory and to impress the heart than when it is delivered in verse. Both the ears of men and the minds of men delight in rhyme and rhythm memory grasps and retains Truth more readily when it is put into poetic form than in any other. Therefore they do well who enrich the Church with Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. And you who cannot make songs will do equally well if you sing them! Let us set the Gospel to music! Let us especially do this in our daily life. I think that the Doctrines of Grace were never intended to be made into a dirge, but they make a most heavenly marriage song. The great Truths of the Gospel were never meant to be told with dolorous tones as if they were sad solemnities, but they are meant to fill us with delightand if they thoroughly permeate our nature, they will turn our whole life into a hallelujah and make every breath a verse of a sonnet that shall know no end! Whenever you feel most glad in the things of God, be sure you do as Mary didsing out your gladness and make the people of God know that the things of Christ are things of joy to you. Obey the poets injunction

*Children of the heavenly King,   
As you journey, sweetly sing!   
Sing your Saviors worthy praise,   
Glorious in His works and ways!*

I commend to you the song of Mary for another reasonnot only because she turned the Truth of God into poetry and song, but because she sang of mercies which were not yet visible to her. She had, with gladness, beheld the King of Glory in her own heart, although the promised Child was not yet born, so with exulting faith she sings, My soul does magnify the Lord. Brothers and Sisters, there are some of you who cannot even sing over a mercy when it is born, but here is a woman who sings over an unborn mercy. Oh, what a faith is this! If you have like precious faith, what a joy it will give to your lives! Is there nothing to sing about today? Then borrow a song from tomorrow! Sing of what is yet to be! Is this world dreary? Then think of the next! Is all around you dark? Then look upward, where they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light! Yet a little whileand we know not how short that, little while, will beand, He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Then shall the children of the bride chamber rejoice with unspeakable joy, because the Bridegroom Himself has come and the day of His marriage has arrived! I beseech you, if you have been silent and hung your harps on the willows, take them down at once and sing and give praise to God for the glory which is yet to be revealed in usthe precious things that are laid up for them that love Him, which eye has not seen, nor ear heardbut the certainty of which He has revealed unto us by His Spirit. Sing unto the Lord concerning mercies yet unborn! Sing those sweet verses which I so often quote to you

*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!   
I have a heritage of joy   
That yet I must not see   
The hand that bled to make it mine   
Is keeping it for me.*

There is something more than this in Marys song, for it is made up entirely of what God has done. Let me read you a verse or twoHe has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. He that is mighty has done to me great things. He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats, He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty. It is all about HIM, you seeall concerning what the Lord had done.

If I had to write a song about myselfhumph!well, that is all I could write! And if you had to write a song about yourself, it would be a wretched ditty if it spoke the truthand I hope you would not want to sing it if it were not the truth! Some peoples songs are all about themselves, and very poor things they are. I heard of a Brother, the other day, who made a speech, and someone said to me, Would you like a full report of his speech? I said, Yes, for I was curious to hear what he would say. The friend said, I was there and took a full report of his speech. Here it is. He passed it over to me and there was nothing but one great capital letter, I. I have known some people who could both speak and sing that way, but that straight, stiff-backed letter, I, makes a very poor song. The less we sing about it, the better. There is no such note in the whole gamut, so let us never attempt to sing it. But when we sing, let us sing unto the Lord and let our song be concerning what He has done.

Where shall we begin, then? Let us begin with everlasting love. I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you. Where shall we end? Well, there can be no end to this song, for the Lords mercies are new every morninggreat is His faithfulness and His loving kindness to His people never knows a pause, much less a close! Therefore, when we begin to sing of what He is doing, let us go on to sing it again, and again, and again, and again! And never let us spoil the tune by coming down to sing of what we have done, or offering any praise or glory to the sons of men.

Do you, then, children of God, see what an example Mary sets you? Turn the Truth of God into songsing of unborn merciesand sing of what the Lord has done and will do, world without end!

Now we come to consider the stanza of Marys song which forms our text. There are two parts to her music. He has filled the hungry with good thingsthat is the air, or perhaps we may say, the alto. And the rich He has sent away emptythat is the base. As we mean to play the bass softly and to give the other part more emphasis, we will take the bass first, and then, afterwards, we will have the alto.

I. First, then, here is THE BASSThe rich He has sent away empty. Are there any such people in the world in a spiritual sense? Yes. Every now and then we come across them. They are not truly richthey are naked, poor and miserablebut they are rich in their own esteem and think they need nothing. They have kept the Law of God from their youth up, or, if they have not done that, they have done something quite as good. They are very full of grace and, sometimes, they wonder that they can hold so much! They are as good as ever they can be and they hardly know how to put up with the company of some Christiansespecially those who are mourners in Zion and are lamenting their sins and their departure from God. They have no patience with these people! They stand by themselves, as did he who was called a Pharisee and who went up to the Temple to pray. And as they hear others making confession of sin, they proudly say, Lord, we thank You that we are not as other men are. Very superior persons, indeed, are theysometimes in education, sometimes in rank and station, sometimes in the weight of their moneybagsbut anyhow, very superior indeed! They consider themselves the upper-crust of society. They are spiritually and morally rich before Godso they think.   
What does the Lord do with such people? Mary says He sends them away empty. They verily thought that he would come out to them! They are so respectable that they are accustomed to be run after and they are greatly astonished that Jesus of Nazareth does not at once bow down to them and thank them for patronizing Him! But He sends them away empty. He wants nothing of them and while they are in such a condition, He has nothing for them. Off they must go with such a word as this in their ears, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners unto repentance. So He sends them away. Does He not give them something as they go? No, He sends them away emptygiving them no comfort, no joy! He certainly does not flatter them, for His lips are lips of Truthno encouragementfor His office is to pull down the mighty from their seats and to spoil the glory of all human boasting and make it bite the dust! He sends them away empty. Does this seem to you like hard treatment? Mary did not think soshe sang about it, she was glad of it! And so am I. Why? you ask. Why?   
Well, first, how could Christ fill these people? They are already full! What can Christ do for a man who has no sin? He came on purpose to save His people from their sinsbut if we havent any, He has nothing to do with us. How shall Christ be bread to a man who is not hungry? How shall He be life to a man who has life in himself? How shall He be the Alpha and Omega of the salvation of a man who is the first and the last to himself and who begins and carries on his own salvation? No, a doctor does not go to heal the man who has no sicknessand Christ does not give His alms away to those who are not needy. When He makes a feast, it is for the poor and the hungry, for they cannot pay Him back except by giving Him their gratitude and their love. So it is rightsince Christ cannot do anything for these rich people in their present conditionHe sends them away empty.   
And, next, what glory would Christ have if He were to fill them? To fill the full is no great achievement! To heal the healthy is no great triumph! To save those who are already saved is surely a superfluity! To give righteousness to those who are already righteous is ridiculous! And to find eternal life for those who have all the life they need is an absurdity! It is well, then, that those who are so full should be sent away empty. They cannot be filled and if they could be, there would be no glory for Christ at all in filling them.

Next, supposing that Christ were to do something for them, then His riches and theirs would have to mix together. That would never do human merits and Christs merits to be placed side by side as of equal value? Who thinks of sewing on a royal robe a rag picked off a dunghill? Yet, what else are those men doing who think that they can add their own righteousness to the righteousness of Christ? No, Sir, if you are rich and increased in goods, you would only have to take Christs goods into your store and lay them along with your own goodsand what a comedown that would be for the righteousness of Christto lie side by side with your own as though it were worth no more! You would need to put up over your door the name of your firmSelf and Christ. And salvation would have to be the work of yourself and the Savior, tooand you would want to share the glory of it. No, no! That can never be! Send that man away empty who has the impertinence to think that he can add something of his own to the merits of Christ, the only Savior!   
Yet again, well may such people be sent away emptyand we may almost be glad of it and sing about it as we see what they do. If a man does not really want salvation and he reads the Bible or hears a sermon, he criticizes the style of it. When some gentlemen go out to dinner, they are very busy examining the table and the ornaments with which it is adorned. They watch the waiters and criticize every dish that is served. Oh, how daintily they taste everything, for they are connoisseurs and everything must be most exquisite to please them! But when you and I come home from a days work, we do not trouble about that kind of thingwe want something to eat and are grateful to have it. Those who have no appetite for Christ begin picking, first, at this and then at that, and even the Bible is not good enough for themthey want to have this amended and that altered! As for the poor sermons preached by mortal menthis does not suit them and the other does not suit themnothing pleases them. There are some children who always pick over their food and their father says, Ah, my boy, if you are sent to the workhouse for a week and get put on short commons, Ill guarantee that you will eat that good meat! You will find an appetite then! So Christ, when these people are at His table turning over every morsel of the heavenly meat, sends them packing! And it serves them right, for they spoil the banquet for those who would enjoy it.   
Beside that, they not only criticize, but they also quibble. Preach the Doctrines of Grace to a man who never had a sense of sin and he says, I dont believe in Calvinism. Tell him of the Sovereignty of God, which is a sweet morsel to Gods own people, and he says I, I, II dont believe in that doctrine. I think there is some merit in the creaturesome claim in fallen humanity to the goodness of God. Solomon said, To the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet, but to this man, who is so full of conceit, there is nothing in the Gospel that is good enoughso he puffs at this and sneers at that, and pshaws at the otherand if you put the butter in a lordly dish, such as the children like to see, he will not have it! Therefore Christ will not have himHe sends him away empty.   
I do not know whether it is not the very best thing that could happen to some of those who think themselves rich that they should be sent away empty, for if they were once to feel their emptiness, they would then come to Christ in quite another styleand then would they join in singing Marys song, He has filled the hungry with good things. If any of you are satisfied with your own goodnessand perhaps there are some such people hereI would remind you of what the farmer said to Mr. Hervey. When Mr. Hervey had become the rector of the parish, he went round and spoke to his parishioners. And he asked a farmer, What have we to overcome in order to get to Heaven? Well, Sir, he replied, you are a clergyman and I think that you ought to tell me, and not ask me to tell you that. Well, said Mr. Hervey, I think that the most difficult thing to overcome is sinful self. Excuse me, said the farmer, but I have found one thing harder than that. What is that? enquired Mr. Hervey. To overcome righteous self, answered the man. And that, I believe, is a most solemn Truth of God! In the case of some of you, I am a deal more afraid of your self-righteousness than I am of your unrighteousness! One thing I know, Christ thinks more of our sins than He does of our righteousness, for He gave Himself for our sinsI never heard that He gave Himself for our righteousness. By His most precious blood, He has put away the sins of all who trust Him. But take care that your selfrighteousness does not come in between you and the Savior, for if it does, you will be among the rich whom He will send away empty! Empty your pockets and make yourselves poor! I do not mean in money, but in spirit. Get down to spiritual poverty and beggary, for that is the only way to attain spiritual riches!   
So much for the bassThe rich He has sent away empty.   
II. Now we come to THE ALTO of this song of MaryHe has filled the hungry with good things. I have not many minutes left, so I will pack my thoughts closely.   
First, here is chosen company. He has filled the hungry with good things. Who are the hungry? Well, they are men and women full of desires for spiritual blessings. They are always desiring good things. They do not say much about what they think, but they have great longings for many things that they do not yet possess. Are you, dear Friend, desiring to be saved? Are you desiring to be reconciled to God? Are you desiring to look unto Christ by faith? Are you desiring to be sanctified? Are you desiring to grow in Grace? Then you are among the hungry ones.   
But hunger is more than a desireit is an appetiteit is a craving born of a stern necessity. A man must eat, or he must die. Therefore hunger is not a desire that he can lay aside. Have you come into such a condition of heart that you must have Christ or die? That you must have mercy or be lost? That you must be forgiven or be cast into Hell? And do you begin, now, to really hunger and thirst after the righteousness which is in Christ? If so, you are among the people whom He will fill with good things! The hungry man sometimes becomes a fainting man. He may tighten his belt to try to stop the gnawing of the inward wolf, but it cannot be stopped, and he gets to feel as if he had no strength and were ready to be dissolved. Do you feel like that? Do you need mercy so badly that you hardly know how to ask for it, you have become so weak, you have sunk down so low? Well, I am glad of it! You are among the very first of those whom Christ will fill with good things!   
The hungry man is often a despised man. They say of such a person, Ah, he has a lean and hungry look! People do not like to associate with men who are very hungry, so they say, Ah, poor beggar! I do not want to be where he is. You have heard that said, have you not? And that is just what men say of those who are spiritually hungry. Very poor company is that man. The other day, when he was sitting in the room where we were all making fun, he was sighing all the time. There is no merriment about him! He sits by himself in the corner, or he gets into his own room and he begins crying, and says that he is a lost man if God does not have mercy upon him. Ah, that is the man for me! I would sit up all night, seven nights running, I think, to meet with people of that kind! They are the sort for whom Christ died, they are the sort Christ loves to feedHe has filled the hungry with good things.   
And you know that when a man gets to be very poor and hungry, not only do people think little of him, but he generally gets to think very little of himself. When the bread is out of a man, the spirit is out of him, too, and he goes groping up and down the streets to try to find a place where he may beg a bit of bread. He is down at the heel, men say. Is there anyone here who is down at the heel spiritually, altogether done for? Poor creature, you are the one Christ came to save! You are the very sort for whom the banquet of love is spread! Your emptiness is that for which Christ is seekingHe has filled the hungry with good things. He has been doing this ever since Mary sang of itHe has done it in the case of many who are now present and He is ready to do it for you. Only open your mouth wide that He may fill it! Put your trust in Him and you shall be filled with good things! That is the first part of this sweet songthe chosen companythe hungry.   
Note, next, the choice meat. He has filled the hungry with good things. Mary might have said, He has filled the hungry with the best of things. See what good things Christ puts into a hungry mans mouth. Lord, he says, I am a sinner. I need pardon. Christ answers, I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins. Is not that good meat to put in the hungry mans mouth? Lord, he says, I need renewal, I need a change of heart. The Lord replies, 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. Certainly that is a good thing with which to fill his mouth! But, Lord, if I am saved, I am so weak that I do not know how I shall stand. Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be. Is not that a good morsel with which to fill his mouth? Ah, Lord! he says, I am prone to wander and I fear that I shall go astray again. I will put My fear in your heart, that you shall not depart from Me. Oh, is not that a blessed morsel to fill his mouth? There is no need which a poor destitute sinner can have which is not provided for in Christ! Listen, poor hungry sinner! There is laid up in Christ all the food that you need between here and Heaventhe best of foodthe very food that your sickly fainting spirit needs is all stored up in Him! How sweet is this song! He has filled the hungry with good things.

The third thing to be noted is this, the completeness of the supply. He has filled the hungry with good things. It is a good thing to give a hungry man a bit and a sup just to stay his stomach for a while, but that is not Christs way of feeding the famishingHe has filled the hungry with good things. I appeal to those of you here present who were once hungry and who came to Christhow did Christ treat you, my Brothers and Sisters? Did He give you just a little scrap of spiritual food, or has He filled you with good things? I think I hear you say, Sir, now I have Christ to live upon, I need nothing else. There is nothing outside the great circle of Christ that I could possibly wish forHe is all I need, all I desire, all I can imagine, all for life and all for death, all for this world and all for the world that is to come. I ask youAre you perfectly satisfied with Christ? Yes! you say, I need none but Christ. He is my All-in-All. Ah, my Brother, my Sister! I, also, can speak as you do. There is an intense enjoyment in the man who has received Christ. He has not only enough, but sometimes he so overflows with satisfaction that he does not know how to tell his tale to others and he longs for the time when he shall get to Heavenwhen the strings of his tongue shall be loosed and he will stop the angels as they go down the golden streets and say, Please, bright spirit, stay a while and let me tell you what Christ did for me, for He has filled me to the brim with His own dear Self and His own infinite love! He has fed me till I need no more. Is not that a blessed word? He has filled the hungry with good things.   
Now, lastly, this song tells us of the glorious Benefactor. HE has filled the hungry with good things. It is God that does it all! He provides the feast. He invites the guests. He brings them to the table. He gives them the appetite, He gives them the power to receive what He has prepared. It is He who fills the hungry with good things. I am so glad of that, for I know some poor hungry souls that cannot even feed themselvesbut the Lord can fill them with good things. We have brought them to the table laden with spiritual dainties, yet their soul has abhorred all manner of meat and they have drawn near to the gates of death. But when no preacher can feed you, God can! And when your very soul seems to turn away, even from heavenly comforts, till you say with the Psalmist, My soul refused to be comforted, the Lord, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, can bring the Truth of God home to your heart till you say, He has done it! He has done it! He has filled the hungry with good things.   
If I had the time and the power, I would like to take that word, He HEHE, and speak it as with a trumpet voiceHE has filled the hungry with good things! Who made the earth and the heavens and filled them with light and glory? The answer is, He has done it. It was the Lord alone who redeemed His people from their sins, who paid the purchase price, who wrestled with their adversaries and trod them under His feet as grapes are trod in the winepress! He has done it. HE has done it! Unto His name be all the praise! Who began the good work in you, my Brother, my Sister in Christ? Who has carried it on up to now? Who will perfect it? Like thunder, I hear the answer from all the redeemed who are before the Throne of GodHE, HE, HE has done it, and unto His name be honor and glory forever and ever!   
Go to Him, thirsty ones! Go to Him by a simple, childlike faith, and you shall then come and join with us in the song, He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty. The Lord bless you, for His dear Sons sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 148; LUKE 1:5-35; 46-56.**

We will first read a short Psalm inciting all to praise the Lord and then we will read part of the first Chapter of Lukes Gospel, especially noticing Marys song of praise. It is a blessed thing to indulge our holy gratitude and to let it have speech in sacred Psalm and song. Praise is the end of prayer and preaching. It is the ear of the wheat: it is Gods harvest from all the seed of Grace that He has sown.

Psalm 148:1. Praise you the LORD. Hallelujah!   
1*.* Praise you the LORD from the heavens. Begin the song, you holy angels before the Throne of God. Lead us in praise, O you glorified spirits above!   
1*.* Praise Him in the heights. Sing aloud, you that sit at Gods right hand in the heavenly places! Let the highest praises be given to the Most High.   
2, 3. Praise Him, all His angels: praise Him all His hosts. Praise Him, sun and moon: praise Him, all you stars of light. Shine out His glory! You are but dim reflections of His brightness, yet praise Him.   
4*.* Praise Him, you Heaven of heavens, and you waters that are above the heavens. Stored up there for mans use and benefit. You clouds that look black to us and yet are big with blessings, praise the Lord. See, Beloved, how the song comes down from the praises of the angels nearest the Throne of God, to the glorified saints, then to the sun, moon, stars and the clouds that float in the firmament of Heaven!   
5, 6*.* Let them praise the name of the LORD: for He commanded, and they were created. He has also established them forever and ever: He has made a decree which shall not pass. Or, pass away. Now the Psalmist begins at the bottom and works up to the top.   
7*.* Praise the LORD from the earth, you dragons, and all deeps. Right down there, however low the caverns may be, let the strange creatures that inhabit the secret places in the very bottoms of the mountains and the depths of the seaslet them send out the deep bass of their praise!   
8-10. Fire, and hail; snow, and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling His word: mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl. If you cannot praise God by soaring up like eagles. If you feel more like the creeping things of the earth, still praise Him! There is something very pleasant in the spiritual allusion that grows out of this verse. You who seem like poor worms of the dust, or insects of an hour, can yield your little need of praise to God!   
11-14. Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: both young men and maidens; old men and children: let them praise the name of the LORD: for His name, alone, is excellent; His glory is above the earth and Heaven. He also exalts the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto Him. They ought to sing best and most sweetly, because they are nearest to His heart. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so. If all other tongues are silent, let them praise the Lord.   
14. Praise the LORD. The Psalm ends, as it began, with Hallelujah! Praise the Lord.   
Luke 1:5, 6. There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. There have been some good people who have lived in very bad times. Never was there a worse reign than that of Herod seldom or never a better man and woman than Zacharias and Elizabeth. Let no man excuse himself for sinning because of the times in which he lives. You may be rich in Divine Grace when others around you have none, even as Gideons fleece was wet with dew when the whole floor was dry. God help us, in these evil days, to be righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless!   
7*.* And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well advanced in years. We do not, at the present time, understand the anguish which filled the heart of an Eastern woman who had no child. It was considered to be a disgraceand many suffered very bitterly on that account, as did Hannah, Rachel and others.   
8-12. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priests office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priests office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. Zacharias must have been astonished as he saw that strange visitorno wonder that fear fell upon him.   
13-17. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you shall have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mothers womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Happy is the father of such a child! Happy is that man whose office it is to be the herald of Christ! Brothers, many of us are called to that office in a certain sense as we come in our Masters name and preach concerning Him   
*Tis all my business here below   
To cry, Behold the Lamb.*   
And in this way we may be partakers of John the Baptists joy!   
18-20. And Zacharias said unto the angel, How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well advanced in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel that stands in the Presence of God; and am sent to speak unto you, and to show you these glad tidings. And, behold, you shall be dumb, and not able to speak until the day that these thingsThese glad tidings   
20. Shall be performed, because you believe not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. Many a child of God is dumb because of unbelief. Mary believed and, therefore, she sang a holy, joyous songa sweet canticle of delightMy soul does magnify the Lord. But Zacharias, because of his unbelief, was unable to speak. I wonder whether there is a man here who might have spoken for his God with power, but whose mouth is closed because of his unbelief? If so, may the Lord hasten the time when his dumbness shall be ended!

21, 22. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. By the signs he made, he impressed them with the fact that something extraordinary had happened.   
23-25. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus has the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein He looked on me to take away my reproach among men. I do not wonder, that in her solemn joy, she shunned the gossips of the neighborhood and kept herself in seclusion. I believe that there is many a soul which, when it has found Christ, feels itself much too full of joy to speak and asks not for a crowded temple, but for a quiet chamber where the heart may pour itself out before God.   
26-35. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgins name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her and said, Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God. And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God. So was she thus visited, and thus she believed with a wonderful faithmuch too wonderful for me to describe in this place. But now let us see what Mary said when she went to visit her cousin, Elizabeth.   
46, 47. And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. She needed a Savior, you see. Though about to become the mother of Jesus, Mary did not think herself without sin! Her eyes still looked to Him who should be her Savior from guilt and condemnation.   
48-55. For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty has done to me great things and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 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 away empty. He has helped His servant, Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to His seed forever. This is one of the sweetest songs that was ever sung and is equal to any of those which came from the Inspired lips of the Hebrew Prophets. Well might she sing who had been thus favored! Oh, if Christ Jesus should come to any of us by faith, what reason would we have for singing! And will not each one of us, who has been thus honored, cry with Mary, My soul does magnify the Lord?   
56. And Mary lived with her about three months, and returned to her own house. What wonderful interviews those two holy women had! The one well advanced in years, and the other youthful, yet both highly favored of God. I wonder what they said? Doubtless angels remember their charming conversation. May the day come when all that fear the Lord, both men and women, shall speak often, one to another, concerning their Redeemer and all that relates to His glorious cause! And then the Lord shall write another Book of Remembrance concerning their hallowed fellowship and communion!

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THE HUNGRY FILLED, THE RICH EMPTIED   
NO. 3019

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1906.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 26, 1869.

**He has filled the hungry with good things;   
and the rich He has sent away empty.   
Luke 1:53.**

Divine Providence is like a wheel and as the wheel revolves, that spoke which was highest becomes the lowest, and that which was lowest is elevated to the highest place. It seems to be one of the works in which God delights to cast down the lofty and to lift up the lowly. He hurls down princes from their thrones and lifts up beggars from the dunghill! Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low. Like the woodman with his axe, the Providence of God is cutting down the high and goodly cedars while making trees that were dry and withered, fruitful. That which is full, God empties. And that which is empty, God fills. That which is something, He makes to be nothing, and that which is nothing, He makes to be something. That which is reckoned the wisdom of this world, God makes to be utter folly, but base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen that He may elevate them and crown them with His Glory.

I am going to take our text as one instance of the general Providence of God and to use it, first, in reference to sinners. Then in reference to saints and, lastly, in reference to saints in their capacity as workers for Christ.

I. First, then, WITH REFERENCE TO SINNERS it is true that, He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty.

The hungry are the poorest of the poor. When a man is homeless, he is poor, but he may still have something in his purse with which to supply his present necessities. When a man is penniless, he is certainly poor, yet he may have just satisfied the cravings of his hunger and before the time shall come for another meal, he may be able to procure it. But when the hour has passed in which the man should have refreshed himself and he is liberally hungry, yet has no means of getting food, then he is one of the poorest of the poor! There are thousands in London who are very poor, but still, they are not actually hungry. They are brought down to poverty, but yet, by some means or other, they are able to get their daily needs supplied. The hungry man is worse off and he represents the lowest degree of spiritual poverty. When a man has lost all his former treasures of self-righteousness, when he has no merits, no strength, no might whateverwhen he is entirely empty and his soul craves for what it cannot find in itself, nor earn of itself, nor by any possibility procure by its own merit or powerthen is the man in the lowest state of spiritual destitution. And when he is brought to that state, then may he expect, in his experience, the fulfillment of the first part of our text, He has filled the hungry with good things.

More than that, the man who is hungry is not only abjectly poor, but he feels his poverty in a way that does not permit him to forget it. The man who has but few clothes upon his back may, by reason of the genial weather, scarcely realize that he is wearing the garb of poverty. A man who sleeps in a miserable hut may seldom have been better housed and, therefore, may scarcely recognize that he is dwelling among the very poor. But he that is hungry has internal evidence that will not allow him to deny, nor even for a moment to forget, his destitution! So is it with certain sinners. They have within them an insatiable hunger which causes a desperate unrest. There is no peace for themneither by day nor by night can they be at ease. Their sins haunt them and the fear of punishment dogs their heels. They long to find mercy, but know not how to seek it rightly. They would be thankful, indeed, to be saved from the wrath to come, but they wonder whether salvation is possible for them. They know they are guilty in the sight of God yet, possibly, they feel grieved to think that they do not feel as much grieved as they should and are vexed to think that they are not more vexed on account of their sins! All this shows very clearly how utterly destitute they must be, and how truly they may write themselves down among the spiritually hungry.

I hope I am now addressing some who are in this condition. Dear Friends, you are well aware that there is no good thing in you, yet you wish there were. Sometimes you fear that you have not even the desire to be right. To be able to confess your sins with a proper tenderness of conscience seems to be a task beyond your powers. You say that you wish you could repent and could believebut I think you are repenting and believing all the while! But even if you are not, this only proves how abjectly poor you are spiritually and how far you have gone astray from Godand how lost, how undone you are! And then comes in this blessed message of our text, He has filled the hungrythat is, such sinners as you are, so full of needsHe has filled the hungry with good things.

How is it that the hungry get filled while the rich are sent away empty? I think it is, partly, because the hungry are not to be satisfied with anything but bread. There are many in the world who spend their money for that which is not breadand they are content with an unsubstantial diet. But a really hungry soul knows that it needs bread and will not be put off with anything else. When a soul really feels the pressure of sin, it needs to have it pardoned, and it will not be content with anything less than pardon. It needs peace with God, and it will never rest till it gets it. The soul that once hungers after God, the living God, will not be put off with ceremonies and so-called sacraments. It needs Christ, Himself! It needs to hear Him say, Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven; go in peace. You can pacify those whose desires are only whims, but when mens desires are based on such voracious appetites as the hungry have, you cannot satisfy them by the clatter of plates and dishes, or the rattling of knives and forks, or even with the sight of food. They must have it to

eatthey will not be put off without it! They cry until they get it and, therefore, they get it, for God hears their cry and grants their request. If a mans prayer is of such a character that only Sovereign Grace, real pardon and true salvation will content his soul, then he shall not be put off with anything else, but he shall have that for which his soul craves. Such a man prays with one of our hymn-writers

*Gracious Lord, incline Your ear,   
My requests vouchsafe to hear.   
Hear my never-ceasing cry,   
Give me Christ, or else I die!   
Lord, deny me what You will,   
Only ease me of my guilt!   
Suppliant at Your feet I lie,   
Give me Christ or else I die!   
You have promised to forgive   
All who in Your Son believe   
Lord, I know You cannot lie.   
Give me Christ, or else I die!*

How vain a thing it is for a man to boast of the privileges he enjoys rather than of the use which he has made of them! How many say, like the Jews of old, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are these, because they think they belong to an orthodox denomination or they are members of a church which is correct in its creed, or they attend a ministry which God has greatly blessed to the salvation of souls. Ah, Sirs! But if the Creed is not believed in your heart, and if the ministry is not blessed to you, your boasting is as vain as that of one who was clothed in rags, died in poverty, but who boasted of the wealth of London! Or of the man who shut his eyes, but who, nevertheless, boasted of the light that shone upon his countenance. Unless you use your privileges. Unless you get through the external husks into the very spirit and kernel of them, instead of boasting, you have reason to be ashamed and to hide your heads! But the truly hungry soul is not satisfied with privileges and opportunitieshe wants Christ! To sit in a place of worship to hear a Gospel sermon, he counts to be a favor, for he is very humble, but it is a favor that cannot content him. His soul cries, Lord, give me Christ! Give me salvation! Give me assurance to know that my many iniquities are cast behind Your back, to be remembered against me no more forever! He cannot be content with anything short of a full Christ for his poor empty spirit!

Further, a hungry soul is likely to get the blessing it craves because it is an importunate soul. You know that our Lord Jesus Christ, in His parable of the widow and the unjust judge, set forth the prevalence of importunate pleading with God. And, on another occasion our Lord used the figure of one who, though not himself hungry, was able to satisfy the hunger of a friend who had unexpectedly called upon him when he had nothing to set before him. But, by his importunity, he obtained for his friend the food that he needed. Yes, and let a man really have the fear of Hell before his eyes and a sincere desire for reconciliation with Godlet his soul be really hungering after peace with God through Jesus Christ and he will be at Mercys door both night and day! He will hammer away at the knocker and give God no rest until He puts forth His hand and gives the Bread of Life to that poor starving suppliant. Yes, it is holy importunity that wins the dayand the spiritually hungry man gets the blessing because his importunity gives success to his pleading with God!

I feel sure that there are some in this place who, knowing their need being painfully conscious that they have no good thing of their ownare hungering after eternal life. I trust that this hunger will grow into a craving that will never be satisfied until you get what your spirit wants. I pray God that you may never be comforted till Christ comforts you never get peace till He becomes your peace, never feel that you are safe till you get into the very heart of Christand never suppose that you are clean till you are washed in the Fountain filled with His blood! Beware of getting peace apart from Christ! Always be afraid of a hope that is not grounded upon Him, for it is far better to continue to hunger and to thirst than to be satisfied with the dust and ashes of this worlds religion, or this worlds pleasures! O you hungry ones, hear the words of the text and be encouragedHe has filled the hungry. Look at that blessed word, filled. He has not merely given them a little refreshment, or administered some temporary consolation to them, but, He has filled the hungrygiven them all that they can wish for, all that their souls really need! Turn to this blessed Book of God and see what promises are there for needy souls. Do they need pardon? There is plenteous forgiveness! Do they need adoption? They shall be My sons and my daughters, says the Lord Almighty. Do they need comfort? There is the Holy Spirit, Himself, to be their Comforter. Do they need anything on earth or in Heaven? Then it shall not be denied to them, seeing that, in giving Christ to them, God has given them all things! He has filled the hungry.

It is a blessed thing to see the man who was once spiritually hungry, after he has had his soul filled by God. How he rejoices! He dances like David did before the Arkno, more than thathis soul seems as though it would dance into Heaven itself with glorious leaps of overwhelming joy! As Christ is mine and Christ is All, I have in Christ all that I can ever desire! It is a blessed fullness, a Divine satiety, a heavenly satisfaction which the Lord gives to us when He makes our youth to be renewed like the eagles by filling our mouth with good things!

We must notice one other word in the text. He has filled the hungry with good things. I shall not be altering the text, but only giving its true sense if I say that He fills the hungry soul with the best of things. They are positively good and they are comparatively goodbetter than all the good things of the world. And they are superlatively good, for even Heaven, itself, has no better things than God gives to poor hungry souls when they come to Him by faith in Jesus. We are apt to think that if men are starving, the most common kind of food will do for them as long as they are able to keep away from deaths doorbut it is not thus that God deals with the spiritually hungry. He spreads the table bounteously, royally, with the best of food and fills the hungry with good thingsnot simply with a good thing, but the word is in the plural, with good things. Their needs are many, so the mercies given to them shall also be many! Their needs seem to be as many as their moments, but the mercies of God exceed their utmost needs! All their capacious souls can wish, they shall find in Jesus Christ, who shall be their All-in-All.

The text, you observe, refers to the past, but it may be taken for granted that what God did yesterday, He will do todayand what He does today, He will do forever, so far as it is necessary and right. And as He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever, all the blessings that He gives to His people shall be continued to them as long as they need them. Some of us can say that we were filled with these good things 20 years ago, and we have never again hungered as we hungered then. The Lord has satisfied our souls by giving us Christand we are fully content with Him! His own word is true to us, 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. God is still filling the hungry with good things. There are many in this house who can testify that in answer to prayer, they have had their griefs relieved and heavenly comforts granted to them and, poor Sinner, God is willing to do the same for you! If you are hungering and thirsting, come unto Him, for there is as much Grace in Him today as there ever was! So come, just as you are, and trust Himrely upon Him and you, too, shall be filled with good things!

The other half of the text, in its reference to sinners, I shall touch upon very brieflyThe rich He has sent away empty. Oh, how many sinners there are who think themselves rich! According to their own valuation, they are rich in merit, but the Gospel has nothing to do with merit! It only deals with misery and, therefore, it sends them away empty because it does not conduct its business on the lines that they approve. There are many sinners who are so rich in their own estimation that they will not take Christ and His Cross for nothing. David knew enough to say to the Lord, With the froward You will show Yourself froward. For You will save the afflicted people, but will bring down high looks. If a man thinks that he is so good that he does not need the Gospel, God regards him as so vile that the Gospel brings no message of mercy to him until he humbles himself and repents. Jesus said, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Of all the sins that can happen to us, perhaps the deadliest of all is that of not being conscious of having any sin. A good old Scotchman used to say that there was no devil in the world so bad as having no devil at all, and that not to be tempted was the worst sort of temptation. I agree, and not to be conscious of any sin is, perhaps, to be at the furthest point from God to which any human being can go, for, the nearer we are to God, the more conscious we are of our own shortcomings and the more earnestly do we struggle to overcome every atom of sin which we discover to be within our souls.

The rich are those who are far from being hungrythey have enough, and to spare. Instead of going down upon their knees, like beggars, to ask mercy from God as a charity, they talk proudly about what they deserve, what good deeds they have done and what they mean to do in the future and, therefore, they thank God that they are not as other men are.

Now, what becomes of these sinners who think themselves so rich that they have no need of the good things with which God fills the hungry? The text does not simply say that they are not fed. It does not say that the door of Mercy is shut in their faces, but it says that they are sent right away from Mercys door because they have no right to stand there! Why should a man be allowed to pray when he has nothing to pray for? These rich people are sent away from Mercys table because they do not want to feed on Mercys fare. Why should they sit there and uselessly occupy places where hungry ones might sit and feast? So they are sent away.

And, mark you, it is an awful thing to be sent away from the Gospel. And it is a remarkable thing that the only people who are sent away from the Gospel are those who consider themselves spiritually rich. You who think yourselves so excellent, moral and amiable. You who cannot see any fault in yourselves. You who think you are going to Heaven because of your good deedsthe Gospel not only does not open its door to you, but it even sends you away from its door! And how does it send you away? The text says, The rich he has sent away empty. Empty even of what you once thought you had! I only hope that the gracious meaning of the text may be fulfilled to some of you and that while listening to the Gospel, you may be made to feel that, after all, you are not spiritually rich, but that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. It will be the best days work that was ever done for you if you are brought to realize your true position and come to Christ confessing your abject poverty! For, as Joseph Hartwell says

*Tis perfect poverty alone   
That sets the soul at large.   
While we can call one mite our own,   
We have no full discharge.*

We know what happened to the two debtors. [See sermon Number 3015, Volume  
52THE TWO DEBTORSRead/download the entire sermon, free of charge at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. But if they had had anything with which they could pay, there would have been no forgiveness vouchsafed to them. Oh, for such an emptying that you may afterwards be filled with good things!

But there are some who are sent away from hearing the Gospel with the same conceit of fullness as they had beforeand they are allowed to remain empty without discovering their true condition. This is a dreadful state for anyone to be into go on deceiving ones self and thinking all is well for time and eternityand only to find out ones fatal mistake where the discovery will come too late! Woe is me, cries the self-righteous professor, when he wakes up in the world to come and finds that he is shut out of HeavenWoe is me that I should ever have fancied that I had a sufficient store of good things for eternity, yet now I have not so much as a drop of water to coat my tongue and I am tormented in this flame! Woe is me that I am banished forever from the Presence of God, and from the glory of His powersent away empty!

O my dear Hearers, may this text be fulfilled to you in a gracious sense, and not in this sense of terrible justice! One of the two it must be, for if you are rich as the text uses that term, you must be sent away empty in one sense or the other. I pray that instead, you may be filled with good things because the Spirit of the Lord has caused you to hunger and thirst after righteousness!

II. I shall now briefly use the text WITH REFERENCE TO SAINTS. Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if your experience at all tallies with mine, I think you will have found that the first clause of this portion of Marys song is most true to you in your spiritual experiences. I find that whenever I am hungrythat is to say, conscious of my utter unworthiness, weakness, insignificancethen it is that Christ is most precious to me. The promises are peculiarly sweet, the Covenant of Grace is a dainty morsel and the assembling of myself with the Lords people brings me to the Kings banqueting table! Is it so with you? When you are hungry, do you get filled with good things? You remember when you were under the Lords chastening hand and much broken in spirit through bodily pain, how precious that promise was, You will make all his bed in his sickness? You were laid aside both from the means of Grace and the cares of business lifeand your soul had time for thought and meditationand in its hunger, the Lord was made very sweet to you. You remember when you were poor, some years ago, when you had to live from hand to mouth, what blessed times you had with your Lord and Master?   
You are supposed to be better off now, but you are really worse off if you do not have so much of Christ as you had then! You used to, then, take the promise, Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure in a more literal fashion than you do now. A message which came to your soul with quickening power was this, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. You were hungry then, so your Lord filled you with good things. Every now and then the pangs of this hunger seize usour spirits sink, our confidence grows dim through the smoke of our sin and we get such a sense of our sinnership as we have not had, perhaps for months. We feel as if we ought never to have made a profession of religion. We are so ashamed of ourselves that if we could ship with Jonah to go to Tarshish, we would be glad to flee from the Presence of the Lord and from the presence of His people, too! At such a time as that, if we hear a Gospel sermon preached to the very chief of sinners, if the preacher opens his mouth wide concerning Sovereign Grace, and forgiving mercy, and the cleansing power of the precious blood of Jesus, oh, how welcome the message is to us! We go to the sanctuary, not to criticize the preacher, but to seek spiritual food for our soulsand if the preacher does the work which God gave him to do, we are filled with good things!   
But, on the other hand, those who reckon themselves to be spiritually rich are sent away empty. Yes, sent away empty from a full Gospel! How many people there are who have such peculiar tastesthey call them such refined tastesthat there are only one or two ministers whom they can hear in a radius of twenty miles! It is a sure sign of a bad spiritual appetite when you must always have little dainties all to yourself, or, in other words, when the old-fashioned Truths of God become distasteful to your palate. There are two things that I always like to see on the tablewhether at breakfast, dinner, or teathey are never out of place. And those two things are bread and salt. And the oldfashioned Gospel, like bread and salt on the table, ought to be in every sermon! And those whose souls are in a right spiritual condition will always want to hear it. There are some who crave fancy cookerythis dish must be prepared after the Plymouth fashion and that dish must be spiced according to some other mode. And if it is not made according to the last new fashion in theology, there are some who cannot feed thereon. Oh, to be brought down from such richness as that and to be made spiritually poor! I am sure that our Bibles would be a hundred times richer to us than they are now if we were a hundred times poorer than we areby which I mean that the Bible would be more truly to us what it really is if we had a truer sense of what we really are. As we went down in our own esteem, it would go up, and the Doctrines of the Bible, the Promises of the Bibleyes, and even the Precepts of the Biblewould possess a wonderful sweetness to us if we had a greater spiritual hunger. Solomon said, The full soul loathes honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. There is such a thing as getting full of our own graces, full of our own prayers, full of our own sermons, full of our own good works, full of ourselvesand what state can be worse than this? It is being blown out almost to bursting. Then, Soul, empty yourself of yourself! And when you think of yourself as you ought to think, you will abhor yourself. You will see no good in yourself whatever, but you will see the black fingerprints of your fallen nature even upon the bright alabaster works of Divine Grace within your souland you will mourn over even your best things because you have defiled them. When we become thus empty, God will fill us with good things.   
III. Now, lastly, I believe, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that our text is true WITH REFERENCE TO CHRISTIANS IN THEIR CAPACITY AS WORKERS FOR CHRIST.  
Give me hungry dogs to hunt with and give me really hungry workers to work with for the Lord Jesus Christ! I mean, men and women who are dissatisfied with the present spiritual condition of the nominal Christian Church, dissatisfied with the progress that is being made, earnestly longing for something better, determinately set on doing something that shall be for Gods Glory and the good of the peoplecrying and sighing for the conversion of souls, not satisfied with ones and twos, but wanting to see the Kingdom of Christ come in all its power and the will of God done on earth as it is done in Heaven! Give me men who will not slumber although the professing Church of God slumbers! Men who cannot rest because sinners do not find rest in Christ! Men who have no peace because Christ has not become the sinners peace! Give me such men, for they will be filled with good things. A Church that longs for the blessing and will not be content without it, will get it, but, on the other hand, the rich church which says, We have got the blessing. We are doing very well. We cannot see anything in which we could improvewe preach the Gospel, we have all the usual agencies, they are all conducted with propriety and with a measure of success. Everything goes on exceedingly well. On the whole, we, perhaps, are ahead of the rest of the churcheswe ought to let well enough alone and not try to get up excitement, or be seeking after what is not attainable and attempting such great things that we are pretty sure to fail in our attempts. Such rich people will be sent away empty.   
Self-satisfaction is the death of progress. Contentment with worldly goods is a blessing, but contentment in spiritual things is a curse and a sin. What did Paul say? Not as though I had already attained. Some of us think, If we could get as far as Paul did, we would be satisfied. But Paul said, Not as though I had already attained, and then he added, Forgetting those things which are behindwhy, some of us wish we had such things to remember! But he wished to forget all that he had done and to think only of what

remained to be doneForgetting 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. Oh, for this sacred forgetfulness, by way of contentment, of all successes and achievements so as still to be pressing forward! I would that every Believer had, for the Glory of God, that spirit which is never satisfied, but always cries for more! I would have the hearts of Christians insatiable as death and the grave, for how can we stand that men should be forever lost? How can we be quiet while Hell is being filled and souls are perishing day and night? How can we be at ease while God is blasphemed, while Christ is unknown in a great part of the world, and where He is known, He is not loved? How can we be contented while the black Prince of Hell seeks to steal the crown rights of King Jesus? Contented and satisfied? Never! Until all over this, our highly-favored land, Christ shall reign as Sovereign Lord! No, not then, nor till in every continent and island the nations of the whole world shall have heard the Gospel and vast multitudes have prostrated themselves at Messiahs feet in loyal and loving adoration!   
Up, saints of God, from your resting places of inglorious sloth and begin to cry aloud, and spare not! Come to Gods Throne with a sacred spiritual hunger, for thus shall the Church of God be filled with good things! May God, in His Infinite Mercy, bless this message and HIS shall be the praise and Glory forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: LUKE 1:26-56.

Verses 26, 27. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgins name was Mary. It was by the temptation of an evil angel that man fell and Paradise was lost. It was, therefore, most appropriate that good angels should be sent to announce the coming of the Restorer, through whom Paradise is regained. Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth. Christs coming to earth must be announced in the lowliest of cities and He must be born in the small Judean town of Bethlehem. But it was also decreed that He must die at Jerusalemin the metropolitan city. Mark the simplicity, and yet the sublimity of the arrangement by which the meek and lowly Savior was to be born in our nature. The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin, whose name was Mary.

28, 29. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this was. The best of news may sometimes cause the greatest trouble of mind and heart. If you feel troubled when you receive a message from God, do not be astonished, as though some strange thing had happened to you. See how Mary, who was told that she was to receive the greatest honor and favor possible to a mortal being, was troubled by the angels speech, perplexed by his extraordinary salutation.

30. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God. If we have found favor with God, there is no cause for us to fear. If God is gracious to us, we are raised above all reason for alarm. Some court the fickle favor of men but even if they gain it, they may well fear that they may shortly lose it. But the angel said, Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God. And having found that favor, she would never lose it.

31, 32. And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He shall be great. How true is that prophecyHe shall be great. Christ is the greatest of all great ones. How great He is in our esteem! The tongues of men and of angels could not tell all His greatness! He shall be great.

32-37. And shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the Throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, your cousin Elizabeth, she has also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible. It seemed meet that the Gospel dispensation should thus begin with two great wonders. The age of wonders has opened upon us now that the day of Grace has dawned. Now shall the barren woman keep house and be the joyful mother of children according to the ancient prophecy.

38. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word. Oh, that we all had such a spirit of submission as she had, that we might be willing to place ourselves absolutely at Gods disposal, for Him to do with us as He pleased!

38. And the angel of the Lord departed from her. His mission was accomplished, so he might go back to the Glory from which he had come at Gods command.

39-43. And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah and entered into the house of Zachariah, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she spoke out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? The most gracious people are always the most humble people. This question of Elizabeth, Why is this granted to me? has been one that we have often put concerning ourselves. She was the older woman of the two, but she felt herself highly honored by this visit from her younger relative whom the Lord had so wondrously favored. It is well when Christian people have a high regard for one another and think less of themselves than they do of others whom God has especially favored. It is one of the traits in the character of Gods true people that they have this mind in themwhile they who think themselves great prove that they are not the Lords. If you think much of yourself, He thinks little of you.

44, 45. For, lo, as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed. Not only Mary, who believed the angels message, and was, therefore, blessed, but everyone of us who believes in God may share in this benediction!

45, 46. For there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. And Mary said. This humble Jewish maiden was a woman of great natural ability. This song of hers is worthy to be sung throughout all ages. It is true that it is mainly taken from the song of Hannah and other songs of devout persons in former ages, but this shows how Mary had studied the Word of God and laid it up in her heart. The best preparation that you young people can have for the highest honor and service in your future life is to bathe frequently in the Word of God and to perfume your whole life by a familiar and accurate acquaintance with Scripture Truths. Nothing else can make you so pure, or so prepared for all service which God may yet have for you to perform.

46. My soul does magnify the Lord. That is a good beginning. Mary does not magnify herself in her Magnificat, she has nothing to say concerning her own dignity, though she was of a noble lineage. But she sang, My soul does magnify the Lord.

47. And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. She needed a Savior as much as we do, for she was a sinner like ourselves. And though she was blessed among women, she here indicates that she owed all that blessedness to the Grace of God, who had become a Savior to her, as well as to us.

48. For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. The family from which Mary sprang had become poor and she dwelt in lowliness at Nazareth.

48, 49. For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name. She was indeed a blessed woman to have such holy thoughts, such reverence for God, such a true idea of His might and majestyand of the marvelous favor which He had shown to her.

50. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. Remember this, it was not mercy to Mary onlyit was mercy to us, and mercy to all who truly trust the Savior in whom she trusted!

51. He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. Sometimes we read of Gods finger. That refers to a part of His great power. At other times, we read of His hand. That is a more brilliant display of His power. But here, as elsewhere, we read of His arm. This is the majesty of His Omnipotence. Pharaohs magicians told the king that it was the finger of God that worked the plagues of Egypt, but it was with His outstretched arm that He divided the Red Sea and overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts. Mary felt that in the work of salvation we see Gods armnot merely His finger, or His hand.

52. He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. This is what God is constantly doingcasting down the high and mighty ones and lifting up the meek and lowly!

53. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty. They who are self-satisfied shall sooner or later be cast out, but those who look to God, alone, and are hungry after Him, shall be satisfied with His favor.

34-56. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy. As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever. And Mary abode with her about three months and returned to her own house.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. END OF VOLUME 52. Sermon #1907 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE TENDER MERCY OF OUR GOD

NO. 1907

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, JUNE 27, 1886, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us, to give light to those who sit in darkness**

**and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace. Luke 1:77-79.**

OBSERVE how Zacharias, in this his joyful song, extolled the remission of sins as one of the most extraordinary proofs of the tender mercy of our God. He had been dumb for a season, as a chastisement for his unbelief and, therefore, he used his recovered speech to sing of pardoning mercy. No salvation is possible without forgiveness and so Zacharias says, To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins. The Lord could not forgive them on the ground of justice and, therefore, He did so because of His tender mercythe tender mercy of our God who has made Himself, our God, by the Covenant of Grace. He passes by the transgression of His people because He delights in mercy.

At the very outset, I want any soul here that is burdened with sin to believe in the forgiveness of sins and to believe in it because God is Love and has a great tenderness towards the work of His hands. He is so full of pity that He loves to not condemn the guilty and looks with anxious care upon them to see how He can turn away His wrath and restore them to favor. For this reason, alone, there is remission of sins! Forgiveness comes not to us through any merit of ours, present or foreseen, but only through the tender mercy of our God and the marvelous visit of love which came of it. If He is gracious enough to forgive our sins, it can be done, for every arrangement is already made to accomplish it. The Lord is gracious enough for thisfor anything! Behold Him in Christ Jesus and there we see Him full of compassion. We sang just now and sang most truly

*His heart is made of tenderness,   
His heart melts with love.*

The main point of this mornings sermon will be to bring into prominence those few words, the tender mercy of our God. To me, they gleam with kindly lightI see in them a soft radiance, as of those matchless pearls of which the gates of Heaven are made. There is an exceeding melody to my ears as well as to my heart in that word, tender. Mercy is music, but, tender mercy, is the most exquisite form of it, especially to a broken heart! To one who is despondent and despairing, this word is life from the dead! A great sinner, much bruised by the lashes of conscience, will bend his ears this way and cry, Let me hear, again, the dulcet sound of these words, tender mercy! If you think of this tenderness in connection with God, it will strike you with wonder, for an instant, that One so great should be so tender, for we are apt to impute to Omnipotence a crushing energy which can scarcely take account of little, feeble and suffering things. Yet if we think again, the surprise will disappear and we shall see, with a new wonder of admiration, that it must be so! He that is truly great among men is tender because He is great in heart as well as in brain and hands. The truly great spirit is always gentle and because God is so infinitely great, He is, therefore, tender. We read of His gentleness and of His tenderness towards the children of men and we see them displayed to their fullest in the Gospel of our salvation! Very conspicuous is this, tender mercy of our God.

Now, the original word is, The mercy of the heart of our God. The Evangelists, though they wrote in Greek, carried with them into that language the idioms of the Hebrew tongue, so that they do not use an adjective, as it would seem from our translationtender mercybut they say, mercy of the heart, or of the inwards, or of the heart of God. The mercy of the heart of God is to be seen in the remission of sin and in the visitation of His love when He comes to us as the Dayspring from on high. Great is the tenderness of Divine mercy!

But I call your attention to the original reading because it seems to me not only to mean tenderness, but much more. The mercy of the heart of God is, of course, the mercy of His great tenderness, the mercy of His infinite gentleness and consideration. But other thoughts also come forth from the expression like bees from a hive. It means the mercy of Gods very soul! The heart is the seat and center of life and mercy is to God as His own life. I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, says the Lord God. God is Lovenot only is He loving, but He is Love itself! Mercy is of the Divine Essencethere is no God apart from His heartand mercy lies in the heart of God. He has bound up His mercy with His existence! As surely as God lives, He will grant remission of sins to those who turn to Him.

Nor is this allthe mercy of Gods heart means His hearty mercy, His cordial delight in mercy. Remission of sins is a business into which the Lord throws His heart. He forgives with an intensity of will and readiness of soul. God made Heaven and earth with His fingers, but He gave His Son with His heart in order that He might save sinners. The Eternal God has thrown His whole soul into the business of redeeming men! If you desire to see God most Godlike, it is in the pardon of sin and the saving of men! If you desire to read the Character of God written out in capital letters, you must study the visitation of His love in the Person of His dear Son and all the wonderful works of Infinite Grace which spring from them. It is a grand sight to behold God in earnest when He says, Now will I arise. With awe we watch Him as He lays bare His armbut this full energy of power is best seen when His work is Grace. When He stirs up His strength to come and save us and brings the Essence of His Being into intense action to bless us, we are, indeed, favored! It is this watching to do us good, this eagerness to bless us which is meant by the mercy of His heart. It is not only tenderness, but intensity, heartiness, eagerness, delight and concentration of power. All this is to be seen in the dealing of God with guilty men when He visits them to grant them the remission of their sins!

Just as the leader of our Psalmody sometimes sounds his tuning-fork at the commencement of our song, so have I done in these opening remarks. Tender mercy is the keynote of my discourse, I want you to keep it, still, in your ears. Whatever else of melody there may come from the text, yet this is to be the chief notethe tender, hearty, intense mercy of God which He has shown us!

I. In the first place, I invite you to observe that He shows this tender mercy in that HE DEIGNS TO VISIT US. Through the tender mercy of our God; with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us.

Observe that God has not merely pitied us from a distance and sent us relief by way of the ladder which Jacob saw, but He has, Himself, visited us. It needs no studied language to preach from this text, the expressions, themselves, are full of holy thought. A visit from God, what must it be! Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him? A visit from the Queen would be remembered by most of you all your livesyou would feel yourselves half ennobled. But a visit from God, what shall I say of it?that He should stoop to leave His high abode and the majesty wherein He reigns to visit insignificant beings like ourselves? This Bible is a letter from Him and we prize it beyond the finest goldbut an actual visit from God, Himselfwhat shall we say of such a favor?

In what ways has the Lord shown His tender mercy in deigning to visit us?   
I answer, first, Gods great visit to us is the Incarnation of our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Many visits of God to men had been paid before thatread your Bibles and seebut the most wonderful visit of all was when He came to tarry here, some 30 years and more, to work out our salvation! What but tender mercy, hearty mercy, intense mercy could bring the great God to visit us so closely that He actually assumed our nature? Kings may visit their subjects, but they do not think of taking upon themselves their poverty, sickness, or sorrowthey could not if they wanted toand would not if they could! This were more than we could expect from them. But our Divine Lord, when He came here, came in our flesh. He veiled His Godhead in a robe of our inferior clay!   
O children! The Lord so visited you as to become a Baby and then a Child who dwelt with His parents and was subject to themand He grew in stature, as you must do. O working men! The Lord so visited you as to become the carpenters son and to know all about your toil and your wearinessyes, even to hunger and faintness! O sons of men! Jesus Christ has visited you so as to be tempted in all points like you are, though without sin! He really assumed our nature and thus paid to us a very close visit. He took our sickness and bore our infirmities. This was a kind of visit such as none could have thought of granting save the infinitely tender and merciful God! The Man is our next kinsman, a Brother born for adversity! In all our affliction He is afflictedHe is tenderness itself.   
Remember that He not only took our nature, but He dwelt among us in this world of sin and sorrow. This great Prince entered our abodewhat if I call it our hut and hovel?wherein our poor humanity finds its home for a season. This little planet of ours was made to burn with a superior light among its sister stars while the Creator sojourned here in human form. He trod the acres of Samaria and traversed the hills of Judea. He went about doing good. He mingled among men with scarcely any reservation, being, through His purity, separate from sinners as to His Character, yet He was the visitor of all men. He was found eating bread with a Pharisee, which, perhaps, is a more wonderful thing than when He received sinners and ate with them. A fallen woman was not too far gone for Him to sit on the lip of the well and talk to her. Nor were any of the poor and ignorant too mean for Him to care for them. He was bone of our bone and flesh of our fleshand His visit to us was, therefore, of the most intimate kind. He disdained no mans lowliness. He turned aside from no mans sin.

But remember that He visited us not merely to look upon us and to talk with us. Not only to teach us and set us a high and Divine example, which, as I have said, were incomparably gracious, if it went no further but He so visited us that He went down into our condemnation that He might deliver us from it! He was made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree. He took our debts upon Him that He might pay them, minting His own heart to create the coinage. He gave Himself for us, which is more than if I said, He gave His blood and His lifeHe gave Himself. So did He visit us that He took away with Him our ill and left all good behind. He did not come into our nature and yet keep Himself reserved from all the consequences of our sin. Nor did He come into our world and yet maintain a status superior to the usual denizens of itno, He came to be a Man among men and to bear all that train of woes which had fallen upon human nature through its departure from the ways of God! Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows because the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all! Our Lord so visited us as to become our Surety and our Ransom. This was a wonderful piece of tender mercy, indeed!   
I feel at this moment as if I could not talk about it, for it excels all conception and speech. Even if I were not full of pain, the subject would master me. If for the first time you had heard of the visit of the Incarnate God to this world, you would be struck with a wonder which would last throughout all eternitythat God Himself should really condescend to such a deed as this! This is the heart of the Gospelthe incomparable fact of the Incarnation of the Son of God, His dwelling upon the earth and His presentation of Himself as a Sacrifice unto God. You need no flourish of words! Just hear the bare statement of the fact and leap for joy because of it! Since God has visited us, not in form of vengeance, nor as a cherub with a flaming sword, but in the gentle Person of that lowliest of the lowly, who said, Suffer little children to come to Me, we are herein made to see the tender mercy of our God! Nothing could be more tender than the Divine appearance of the Man of Sorrows.   
But I do not think we ought to insist upon this as the only visit of Gods tender mercy, since the text is, in the Revised Version, rendered in the futureThe tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high shall visit us. To this day we are visited of God in other respects, but with equal mercy. The proclamation of the Gospel in a nation, or to any individual, is a visit of Gods mercy. Whenever you come and hear the Gospel, you can be sure of this, whether you receive it or not, the Kingdom of God has come near to you! Even if you stop your ears and will have none of it, yet God has visited you in tender mercy in that by the Gospel He tells you that there is a way of salvation, that there is a plan for the remission of sin. It is a monstrositywhat if I say, a miracleof iniquity, that men having sinned and God, having done so much to work out a way of remission of those sins, men should refuse to accept Gods pardoning love! Oh, my Hearers, why are you so foolish? Why do you hate your own souls? Surely, the devils, themselves, would, at the first, have scarcely believed it, that there could exist a race of creatures so hardened as to refuse the love which visits them in Grace! This is what devils never did. Men sin not only against God, but against their own interest when they turn aside from the wooing of disinterested goodness and refuse salvation through Him who loved us even to the death! That which God has so tenderly and heartily worked out in the gift of His dear Son to die for us ought to be received with eagerness. Will not you receive it? My dear Hearers, you shall not go out of this place this morning without knowing that God in great tender mercy has visited you by the blessed fact of your having heard the good tidings of Free Grace! Jesus seeks you, will you not seek Him?   
But, blessed be His name, He has visited some of us in a more remarkable manner, still, for, by the Holy Spirit He has entered into our hearts and changed the current of our lives! He has turned our affections towards that which is right by enlightening our judgments. He has led us to the confession of sin. He has brought us to the acceptance of His mercy through the atoning bloodand so He has truly saved us! What a visit is this! This visit of the Holy Spirit, when He comes to dwell in us, is surpassingly condescending. I have often said that I never know which to admire more, the Incarnation of the Son of God, or the indwelling of the Spirit of God! This last is a wonderful condescension, for the Holy Spirit does not take a pure body of His own, but He makes our bodies to be His templesHe dwells not only in one of these, but in tens of thousands and that not only by the space of 30 years, but throughout the whole life of the Believer! He dwells in us notwithstanding all our provocations and rebellions. Mark the word, not only with us, but in us and that, always! Oh, this tender mercy! Who can describe it? Sweet Spirit, gentle Spirit, how can You abide with me? O heavenly Dove, how can You find rest in such a soul as mine? Yet without You, we are undone and, therefore, we adore the tender mercy which makes You bear with us so long and work in us so graciously till You have conformed us to the image of the FirstBorn. We are melted by the love of the Spiritthe communion of the Holy Spirit by which the Lord has visited us!   
Often and often, since our first visitation by the Lord, I trust we have had special visits from Him, bringing with them rapturous joys, singular deliverances and countless blessings. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. The Lord has visited us in the night. He has drawn near unto our spirit and so He has preserved us. We have enjoyed near and dear communion with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. Have we not? This has often happened when we have been in great trouble. When we were depressed in spirit, when we were burdened with unusual cares, or weeping over heartbreaking bereavements, the mercy of our God has made the Dayspring from on high visit us at just such timesand in it we have seen His tenderness! Our life is bright with these visits as the sky with stars. I cannot enlarge upon this charming theme, but I leave it to your thoughts, O you whose experience will be the best sermon on the text! The visits of God to His own children are proofs of the heartiness, the intensity, the tenderness of His mercy. Talk of it, you who have had most enjoyment of such visits!   
II. I call your attention, now, to a second point. There is so much sea here that one scarcely knows which way to steer. Secondly, He shows His tender mercy in that HE VISITS US AS THE DAYSPRING FROM ON HIGH. This means the dawning in the east, the rising of the sun at break of day. He does not come to us in Christ, or by His Spirit, as a tempest, as when He came from Paran with 10,000 of His holy ones, in all the pomp of His fiery Law, but He has visited us as smiling morn which, in gentle glory, floods the world with joy.   
While this Gospel visitation is thus apparently less in splendor than that of the Law, yet it is not deficient in efficacy or in true Glory. God has not visited us as a candle which might suffice to cheer our darkness but could not change it into day. David rejoiced, saying, The Lord will light my candle, but in this we go far beyond himwe need no candle, for the Lord has visited us with the dawn of day.   
He has come, moreover, not as a blaze which will soon die down, but as a light which will last our day, yes, last forever. After the long dark and cold night of our misery, the Lord comes in the fittest and most effectual mannerneither as lightning, nor candle, nor flaming meteor, but as the sun which begins the day!   
The visitation of the Lord to us is as the Dayspring because it suits our eyes. Observe how the eyes are suited to the light and the light to the eyes in the economy of Natureand it is even so in the realm of Grace. Day, when it first breaks in the east, has not the blaze of burning noon about it, but it peeps forth as a gray light, which gradually increases to the perfect day. So did the Lord Jesus Christ comedimly, as it were, at first, at Bethlehem, but, by-and-by, He will appear in all the Glory of the Father. So does the Spirit of God come to us in gradual progress. There is sweet suitableness in the Grace of God to the heart and in the renewed heart to the Grace of God. He has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. The Revelation of God to each individual is made in form and manner tenderly agreeable to the condition and capacity of the favored one. I sometimes think the Gospel was made exactly to meet my case. Do you not think the same of it, yourselves? The morning light suits your eyes as exactly as if there were no other creature to behold it and so, in Divine tenderness, the Lord has made His visits suitable to our sorrow and even to our weakness! He shows us just so much of Himself as to delight us without utterly overwhelming us with the excess of brightness. He might have come in the majesty of His Grace to us at the first, as He does to us afterwards, but then we would not be able to bear it, and so He forbore. We are now more ready to sup with Him upon strong meat and so He puts us upon mens fare, whereas, before, He gave us milk which is more convenient for babes. All the visits of God to us are merciful, but in those of the dawn of Grace we see tenderness as well as mercy.   
The visits of God are like the dayspring, because they end our darkness. The dayspring banishes the night. Without noise or effort, it removes the ebony blackness and sows the earth with Oriental pearl. Night stretches her bats wings and is goneshe flies before the arrows of the advancing sun. And the coming of Jesus to us, when He does really come into our hearts, takes away the darkness of ignorance, sorrow, carelessness, fear and despair. Our night is ended once and for all when we behold God visiting us in Christ Jesus! Our day may cloud over, but night will not return. O, you that are in the blackest midnight, if you can but get a view of Christ, morning will have come to you! There is no light for you elsewhere, believe us in this, but if Jesus is seen by faith, you shall need no candles of human confidence, nor sparks of feelings and impressionsthe beholding of Christ shall be the ending of all night for you. They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.

I like to think of Christ as coming into the world as the morning light because He comes with such a largeness of present blessingblessing unlimited and immeasurable! Some are always for measuring out Christ they can never do without estimates of how much and how far. Truly our Lord comes to save His elect, that I do verily believe and, therefore, certain friends would allot so many beams of light to so many eyes and limit the Light of God by the number of those who rejoice in it! Not so, Beloved! Jesus is the Light of the world! He comes from on high to shed light over the whole universe, even as the sun goes forth from one end of Heaven to the other, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. He appears as the Light of God which lightens every man that comes into the worldthere is no other Light! Whoever is willing to receive that Light is free to do so! Yes, He shines on blind eyes. This light comes even to those who hate it and thus they are left without excusethe light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. And this is the condemnation, that Light of God is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than Light because their deeds were evil. When the Lord comes to men, His blessings are infinite. You might as well take your three feet rule and begin to measure the length and breadth of the sunlight as measure the length and breadth of the tender mercy of our God in the Revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ!   
When the Lord visits us, it is as the dayspring, because He brings us hope of greater Glory yet to come. The first coming of Christ has not, at once, manifested everything. The dayspring is not the noon, but it is the sure guarantee of it. And so is the First Advent, the pledge of the Glory to be revealed. The sun never rises in error to set upon a suddenhe rises to complete his course, as the strong man comes out of his chamber to fulfill his race. When we receive a visit from the Lord, it may be in the way of rebuke, or of feeble hope, but let us be patient, for the dawn shall grow with constant increase of lightand there is no fear of its dying down into the old sinful darkness. Sacred, high, eternal noon is the destiny of all those whose eyes have beheld the Christ, so as to rejoice in His Light!   
Now all this seems to me to be a wonderful instance of the tenderness of Divine mercy. Do you not think so? This coming of the Lord and of His Light so gradually and yet so lavishlyso fittingly and yet so effectually does it not fill you with gratitude? Every little bird rejoices in the rising of the sunGod has made that great orb to rise so graciously that not even a sparrow trembles at it, but chirps with confidence its happy praises! Not even a little flower trembles because the great sun is about to flood the heavens, but God has so made the sun to rise that every tiny cup of every flower that blooms opens to drink in the golden light and is refreshed. The coming of Christ is just such to us, even to the least and feeblest of us! It is not a stupendous blessing, crushing us by its enormous weight. It is not a mysterious Revelation, confounding us by its profundity. It is simplicity, itself, gentleness itselfnone the less, but all the more grand and sublime because it is so simple and so tender! Let us bless God this morning, then, that He visits us and that when He visits us, it is as the Dayspring from on high.   
III. Thirdly, there is another instance of great tenderness in this, in that THE LORD VISITS US IN OUR VERY LOWEST ESTATE. Permit me to read the text to youTo give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, from which it appears that God comes to visit us when we are in our sins. If the plan of salvation were that we were to get out of our sins and then God would come to us, it might be full of mercy, but it would not be tender mercy! Let it never be forgotten that, When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. I feel always at home when I get upon this blessed topic of the visits of God to undeserving, ill-deserving, Helldeserving sinners! His saving visits spring from Grace, pure Grace, altogether unmixed with any merit or claim on our part. God comes to us as the morning which does not wait for man, nor tarry for the sons of men.   
I cannot stand the spirit which I see spreading among us in reference to almsgiving. It should not be indiscriminate, but it should be bounteous. Many cry, We shall give help only to the deserving. If God were to adopt that rule, where would you and I be? It has even been muttered in an undertone that with regard to hospitals, no doubt they are used by persons who ought to provide for themselves and so help to support struggling medical men. It may be so, but I do not like the hard and niggardly spirit which suggests such criticisms! Talk not sothis is fit chatter for barbarians! Those who know the tender mercy of God will remember that when we had no good about us, whatever, His tender mercy visited us, even as the sun arises upon the just and upon the unjust! He gives with gladness to those who have no merit of any kind. He will not mar the magnificence of His goodness by asking our pitiful pence of merit as a payment for it, but He gives freely, according to the riches of His Grace. As He makes His rain to water the fields of the miser and of the fool, as well as those of the kind and the generous, so does He give His bounty to the worst of men! Let us learn this and imitate it, for thus we shall know the tender mercy of God. To copy the Divine Example will be the most sure method of coming to an understanding of it.   
Furthermore, our God visits us when we are in darknesswhen we are in such darkness as to know nothing, see nothing, believe nothing, hope nothingeven then, the Lords mercy comes to us! Is not this tenderness? Educate a man up to a certain point, says one, and then we may hope that Gods Grace will visit him. Educate him, by all means, but have hope that God may visit even those who have no education of any sort! Follow the advance of civilization, cries one, and do not risk your missionaries among barbarians. Not so! Our marching orders are, Preach the Gospel to every creature. The Gospel is to precede and produce civilization! To them that sit in darkness, the Lord is pleased to send the dayspring from on high. To send light where there is light is superfluous. Have we not a proverb about sending coals to Newcastle? God sends not Grace to us because we have something already which may be viewed as anticipatory and preparatory, but the anticipatory and the preparatory are of His Grace and He comes in love to bring these with Him, to those who as yet know nothing of His light and life! They are in the dark and He creates their day. Did you notice that it is said, to those that sit in darkness? This is more than being in the dark! The man who sits in darkness does so because he feels that his case is hopeless and, therefore, he forbears all further action. A poor benighted traveler has wandered this way and that to find a road, but it is so dark that he cannot perceive his road and so, at last, he embraces the rock for need of a shelter, crouching to the earth in despair! It is a part of the tender mercy of our God that He visits those who despond and are motionless in a dread inactivity. Those who have lost hope are lost, indeed, and such the Savior has come to save!   
Then it is added, and in the shadow of death. Did you ever feel that shadow? It has a horrible influence. Chill and cold, it freezes the marrow of the bones and stops the genial current of life in the veins. Death stands over the man and if his hand does not smite, yet his shadow darkens joy and chills hope, benumbing the heart and making life, itself, a mode of death. The shadow of death is confusion of mind, depression of spirit, dread of the unknown, horror at the past and terror of the future. Are any of you, at this time, bowing down under the shadow of death? Has Hell gaped wide and opened her jaws for you? Have you, in your despair, made a league with death and a covenant with Hell? Thus says the Lord, Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with Hell shall not stand, for the Lord has come forth and visited you in the Person of His dear Son to deliver the captive and save those who are appointed unto death! Knowing your guilt, the Lord visits you, this morning, and bids you look up. Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Look and live; look and be delivered at once, even from the horrible death shadow which now broods over you.   
I delight to think of this tender mercy of God to those who are lost! There are lost who shall be found and last who shall be first! You seem forgotten of God, left out of the register of hope, but yet to you have Jesus cometo give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. Is not this tender mercy? If He had not come to shine on such, I would never have been saved! A Gospel for the cheerful would never have met my case. I needed a Gospel for the despairing! I know some here who would have perished if the Gospel had only been suitable to those who are of good character and have the beginnings of natural religion within them. Only a sinners Savior could have suited some of you, or, indeed, any of us! As the good Samaritan did to the wounded man, he came where he was, so did Jesus come to us in our ruin. The benefactor of the wounded did not stand and say to him, Come here and get on my beast, and he shall carry you to the inn. But he went to him when he was lying half dead and, therefore, helpless! And he poured the oil and wine into his wounds while the poor wretch could not move an inch, nor stir hand or foot. He bound up his wounds and then set him on his own beast and took him to the inn! This is tender mercyand in this fashion Jesus deals with us! He does everything for us from the very beginning. He is Alpha, even as He must be Omega! Does not this show the tender mercy of our God, that He comes to us in the darkness and, under the grim shadow of deaththen and there reveals His love to us?

IV. Both time and strength fail me, so now I must finish with a fourth reflection from the textOur God shows His tender mercy in that HE VISITS US WITH SUCH WONDERFUL AND JOYFUL RESULTSTo give light to those who sit in darkness, to guide our feet into the way of peace. One sketch must suffice. Help me as I make an outline. Imagine a caravan in the desert which has long lost its way and is famishing. The sun has long gone down and the darkness has caused every ones heart to droop. All around them is a waste of sand and an Egyptian darkness. There they must remain and die unless they can find the trail. They feel themselves to be in a fearful case, for, hungry and thirsty, their soul faints in them. They cannot even sleep for fear. Heavier and heavier the night comes down and the dampness is on the tents chilling the souls of the travelers. What is to be done? How they watch! Alas, no star comforts them! At last the watchmen cry, The morning comes! It breaks over the sea of sand and, what is better, it reveals a heap which had been set up as a way mark, and the travelers have found the trail! The dayspring has saved them from swift destruction by discovering the way of peace!   
Our point is this, that when the Lord Jesus Christ visits us, He actually brings the Light of God to our darkness. He really leads into the Way and makes that Way a way of peace to us. Put all together and remember what the Lord has done for you! You did not know the way, once, and all the preaching in the world would not have made you know it, if Jesus had not, by His Spirit, visited you as the Dayspring! When you did know the Way, you could not reach it by yourselfyou saw it as from a distance and could not enter upon itbut when Jesus came near, He actually guided your feet into that Way. He put your feet upon a rock and established your goings. That Way, good as it was, would have been to you a way of doubt, fear and hesitation, if the Lord had not so sweetly shone upon you that your road became a way of perfect peace. Peace in our text means prosperity, plenty, rest, joy. I ask you, Friends, whether you have not found it so. Since the Lord has visited you, have you not gone forth with joy and been led forth with peace?   
Well, now, the conclusion of all this is a practical matter. If the tender mercy of God has visited us and done so much more for us than I can tell, or than you can hear, let us exhibit tender mercy in our dealings with our fellow men. It is a wretched business for a man to call himself a Christian and have a soul which never peeps out from between his own ribs! It is horrible to be living to be saved, living to get to Heaven, living to enjoy religion and yet never to live to bless others and ease the misery of a moaning world! Do you not know that it is all nonsense to regard religion as a selfish spiritual trade by which we save our own souls? It is useless to hope for peace till you know how to love! Where do wars and fights come from but from a lack of love? Unless your religion tears you away from yourself and makes you live for something nobler than even your own spiritual good, you have not passed out of the darkness into the Light of God. Only the way of unselfishness is the way of peace! I ask you, therefore, today, to think very tenderly of all poor people. These are hard timeslet those who have more than they actually need be always ready to relieve distress which is very urgent just now.   
The call this morning is for liberal help to our hospitals. These are called in France, houses of Godtruly they are Godlike in their design! There is not a man here but may be in a hospital tomorrow. Do you reply that you are a wealthy man? Yet you may be run over in the street, or fall in a fitbut the hospitals door is open to you. It is not merely for the beggar, but for the noble, that this is a refuge. Many a time men of immense wealth have had to be carried to the hospital from injury inflicted by fire or water, accident, or sudden sickness. I appeal to your selfishness and to your honorpay your proportion towards a common protection.   
But I appeal to you on higher grounds. I forget, just now, how many thousands of cases of accident have gone into the hospital during the past year, but it is very surprising. They never ask who they are, or where they come from, but receive all the wounded. Every great accident involves a huge expense upon the hospital which is near the spot. This is not sufficiently thought of, or there would be special contributions on each sad occasions. Few consider how these noble institutions are supported. Oh, the rich people give to them! Alas, the rich people often forget them! Oh, but these general collections will do the work! No such thing! It is such a pitiful contribution which usually makes up a collection that the hospitals are little aided. These institutions are left to run into debt, or spend their capital, or keep their beds empty. I could not too strongly put the case of hospitals just now. I have half wished that the Government would undertake them, only I am not sure that they would be so well conducted in that case as when they are left to private management by hearts that feel for men.   
Something must be done. We must give a great deal more! The collections ought to be at least twice as much in all our Churches and Chapels as they have ever been. If you were present when a man was run over and you heard his bones break, you would put your hand into your pocket, or do anything else in your power to help him. I wish I could make you feel as if you were in the presence of such a calamity for a minute, so as to touch your hearts and your hands. Diseases are always abroad and driving thousands to seek hospital help. I would like to take you down a ward and cause you to listen to the stories told from half-a-dozen beds. What sickness! What poverty caused by sickness! What pains poor bodies are capable of enduring! Oh, come, let us help them! Let us give to the support of those who nurse them and for the help of those who exercise their best skill for their relief. Who can withhold? By the tender mercy of our God, I charge you to give freely to this excellent cause! As the box goes round, remember that this is not the time for three-penny pieces. You who are wealthy must write checks or give notesyou may send them to our treasurer if you prefer. All must be generous for the sake of that tender mercy which is the dayspring of our hope and life!

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GODS TENDER MERCY   
NO. 3029

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, MAY 23, 1869.

**The tender mercy of our God.   
Luke 1:78.**

IT was a proof of great tenderness, on Gods part, to think of His sinful creature, man, at all. When the created one had willfully set himself in opposition to his Creator, that Creator might at once have destroyed him, or have left him to himselfto work out his own destruction. It was Divine tenderness that looked on such an insignificant creature impudently engaging in so gross a revolt! It was also infinite tenderness which had, long before that, considered man so carefully as, practically, to frame a plan by which the fallen might be restored. It was a wonder of mercy that Infallible Wisdom should unite with almighty power to prepare a method by which rebellious man might be reconciled to his Maker. It was the highest possible degree of tenderness that God should give up His own Son, His only-begotten Son, that He might bleed and die in order to accomplish the great work of our redemption. It is also indescribable tenderness that God should, in addition to the gift of His Son, take such pity upon our weakness and our wickedness as to send the Holy Spirit to lead us to accept that unspeakable Gift. It is Divine tenderness which bears with our obstinacy in rejecting ChristDivine tenderness which plies us with incessant expostulation and invitation all to induce us to be merciful to ourselves by accepting the immeasurable Gift which Gods tender mercy so freely presents to us.

It was wonderful tenderness on Gods part that when He thought of saving man, He was not content with lifting him up to the place which he had occupied before he fell, but he must lift him far higher them he was before, for, before the Fall, there was no man who could truly call himself the equal of the Eternalbut now, in the Person of Christ Jesus, manhood is united with Deity! And of all the creatures that God has made, man is the only one whom He has taken into union with Himself and set over all the works of His hands. There was infinite tenderness in Gods first thoughts of love toward us and it has been Divine tenderness right through up till now! And that same tenderness will bring our souls into Heaven where we shall say with David, Your gentleness has made me great.

I am going to speak of the tenderness of Gods mercy towards sinners, in the fond hope that, perhaps, some of you who have never yet loved our God, may see how great has been His love to you and so may be enamored of Himand trust in His dear Son, Jesus Christand so be saved!

I. And, first, I will try to show you that in the mercy of God THERE IS GREAT TENDERNESS IN ITS GREAT PROVISIONS.   
There is a wounded soldier bleeding out his life upon the battlefield and here comes a friend, merciful and tender, who has brought him a refreshing draught which will help to bring him back to consciousness and open his half-glazed eyes again. He is covered with a clammy sweat, but there is cold water with which to wipe his fevered brow. His wounds are gaping wide and his very life is oozing forth from him, but his friend has brought the salve and bandages with which to strap up every wound. Is this all that he has provided for the wounded warrior? No, for there is a stretcher, carried by men who choose their steps with care, so that they do not jolt the poor invalid. Where will they carry him? The hospital is prepared. The bedso soft, just fit to bear such a mass of weakness and painis waiting for him and the nurse stands there in readiness to render such service as may be required. The man soon sleeps the sleep that brings with it restorationand when he opens his eyes, what does he see? Just such food as is suited to his circumstances and needs! A bunch of flowers is also placed near him, to gladden and cheer him with their beauty and fragrance. And a friend comes stepping softly up, and asks whether he has a wife, or a mother, or any friend to whom a letter may be written for him. Before he thinks of anything that he needs, it is there beside him and, almost before he can express a wish, it is supplied! This is one instance of the tenderness of human sympathy, but infinitely greater is the tenderness of God towards guilty sinners! He has thought of all that a sinner can possibly need and he has provided in abundance all that the guilty soul can require to bring him safe into Heaven itself!

For every individual case, God, in the Covenant of His Grace, seems to have prepared some separate good thing. For great sinners, whose iniquities are many and gross, there are gracious words like these, Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If the man has not fallen into such depths of open sin, the Lord says to him, as the tenderhearted Savior said to one who was in that condition, One thing you lackand that one thing the Grace of God is prepared to supply! There is as much in the Word of God to encourage the moral to come to Christ as there is to woo the immoral to forsake their sins and accept the tender mercy of our God. If there are children or young people who desire to find the Lord, there is this special promise for them, Those that seek Me early shall find Me. Yes, even for the little ones there are such tender words as these, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God. Then, if the sinner is an aged man, he is reminded that some were brought to labor in the vineyard even at the 11th hour! And if he is actually dying, there is encouragement for him in the narrative of the dying thief who trusted in the dying Savior and who, when he closed his eyes on earth, opened them with Christ in Paradise! So again I say that in the Covenant of His Grace, God has seemed to meet the peculiar case of every sinner who really desires to be saved. If you are very sad and depressed, desponding and almost dismayed, there are Divine declarations and promises that are exactly suited to your case! Here are a few of themHe heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench. Everything seems to be done on purpose that into whatever condition a man may have fallen through the grievous malady of sin, God may come to him, not roughly, but most tenderly, and give to him just what he most needs! I rejoice to be able to say that all that a sinner can need between here and Heaven is provided in the Gospel of Christall for pardon, all for the new nature, all for preservation, all for perfecting and all for glorifying is treasured up in Christ Jesus, in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell!   
Let us, then, before we go any further, bless that tender thoughtfulness of God which, foreseeing the greatness of our sins and our sorrows, our needs and our weaknesses, has provided for our vast necessities a boundless store of Grace and mercy!   
II. But, secondly, the tenderness of God is seen IN THE METHODS BY WHICH HE BRINGS SINNERS TO HIMSELF.   
The old system of surgery may have been useful in its time, but it certainly was not very tender. On board a man-of-war after action, what rough methods were adopted by those who were trying to save the lives of the wounded! Some of the remedies that we read of in the old doctors books must have been a great deal more horrible than the diseases they were intended to cure, and I do not doubt that many of the patients died through the use of these rough remedies. But Gods method of showing mercy to man is always Divinely tender. It is always powerful but, while masculine in its force, it is feminine in its tenderness.   
See now, my dear Hearer, God has sent the Gospel to you, but how has He sent it? He might have sent it to you by an angela bright seraph might have stood here to tell you, in flaming sentences, of the mercy of God. But you would have been alarmed if you could have seen him and you would have fled from his presence! You would have been altogether out of order for the reception of the angelic message. Instead of sending an angel to you, the Lord has sent the Gospel to you by a man of like passions with yourselfone who can sympathize with you in your waywardness and who will affectionately try to deliver his message to you in such a form as will best meet your weakness. Some of you first heard the Gospel from your dear mothers lipswho else could tell the sweet story as well as she could? Or you have listened to it from a friend whose tearful eyes and heaving bosom proved how intensely she loved your soul. Be thankful that God has not thundered out the Gospel from Sinai with sound of trumpet, waxing loud and long, reminding you of the terrific blast of the last tremendous day, but that the blessed message of salvation, Believe and live, comes to you from a fellow creatures tongue in melting tones that plead for its reception!   
See also the tenderness of Gods mercy in another respect, in that the Gospel is not sent to you in an unknown tongue. You have not to go to school to learn the Greek, or Hebrew, or Latin language in order that you may read about the way of salvation. It is sent to you in your homely Saxon mother tongue. I can honestly say that I have never sought after the beauties of eloquence and the refinements of rhetoric, but if there has been a word, more rough and ready than another, which I thought would favor my purpose of making plain the message of the Gospel, I have always chosen that word. Though I might have spoken in another fashion had I chosen to do so, I have thought it right and best, as the Apostle Paul did, to use great plainness of speech, that no one of my hearers might be able to truthfully say, I could not understand the plan of salvation as it was set forth by my minister. Well, then, since you have heard the Gospel so plainly preached that you have no need of a dictionary in order to understand it, see in this fact the tender mercy of God and His desire to win your soul unto Himself!   
Remember, too, that the Gospel comes to men not only by the most suitable form of ministry, and in the simplest style of language, but it also comes to men just as they are. Whatever your condition may be, the Gospel is suitable to you. If you have lived a life of vice, the Gospel comes to you and says, Repent you therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. You may, on the other hand, have lived a life of selfrighteousness. If so, the Gospel bids you lay aside this worthless righteousness of your own, which is as filthy rags, and bids you put on the spotless robe of Christs righteousness! You may be very tenderhearted, or you may be quite the reverse. Your tears may readily flow, or you may be hard as the neither millstone, but, in either case, Gods Gospel is exactly suited to you! Yes, blessed be the name of the Lord, if a sinner is at the very gates of Hell, the Gospel is adapted to his desperate condition and can lift him up even out of the depths of despair!   
One other thing I want you to particularly notice, and that is that the mercy of God is so tender because it comes to you now. If you are able to relieve a poor sufferer at once, and yet you keep him waiting, your treatment is as cruel as it is tardy. But Gods Gospel says, Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation! If any sinner stands outside Mercys gate for even half an hour, he must put the blame for his exclusion down to his own account, for, if he would but obey the Gospel message and trust to the finished work of Christ, the door would be opened at once! Such delays as this are not Gods delays, but ours! And if we postpone our acceptance of His mercy, we have ourselves to blame!   
III. Now I must pass on to notice, thirdly, THE TENDERNESS OF GODS MERCY IN THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE GOSPEL.   
What does the Gospel ask of us? It certainly asks nothing of us but what it gives to us. It never asks of any man a sum of money in order that he may redeem his soul with gold. The poorest are as heartily welcomed by Christ as the richest! And the beggar who could count all his money on his fingers is as gladly received as the millionaire who has his stocks and his shares, his lands and his ships! Poor men are bid to come to Jesus without money and without price.   
Neither does the Lord ask of us any severe penances and punishments in order to make us acceptable to Him. He does not require you to put your bodies to torture, or to pass through a long series of outward and visible mortification of the flesh. You may trust Christ while you are sitting in your pewand if you do so, you shall be at once forgiven and accepted!   
No great depth of learning is asked as a condition of salvation. In order to be a Christian, one need not be a philosopher. Do you know yourself to be a sinnerguilty, lost, condemnedand Christ to be a Savior? Do you trust Christ to be your Savior? Then you are saved, however ignorant you may be about other matters!   
Nor is any great measure of spiritual depression asked as a qualification for coming to Christ. I know that some preachers seem to teach that you must not come to Christ till you have first been to the devilI mean that you must not believe that Christ is able and willing to save you until you have been, as it were, right up to Hells gates in terror of conscience and awful depression of spirits! Jesus Christ asks not anything like this of youbut if you truly repent and forsake your sins, give up the evils which are destroying you and put your trust in the griefs and pains which He endured upon the Cross, you are saved!   
Nor does the Gospel even ask a great amount of faith of you. To be saved does not require Abrahams faith, nor the faith of Paul or Peter. It requires a like precious faithfaith similar in substance and in essence, but not in degree. If you can but touch the hem of Christs garment, you shall be made whole! If your view of Christ is such a poor trembling glance that you seem to yourself scarcely to have seen Him, yet that look will be the means of salvation to you! If you can but believe, all things are possible to him that believes! And though your belief is but as a grain of mustard seed, yet shall it ensure your entrance into Heaven! What a precious Savior Christ is! If you have sincere trust in Him, even though it is but very faint and feeble, you shall be accepted. If you can, from your heart, say to Christ, Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom, you shall soon have His gracious assurance, You shall be with Me in Paradise. Do not delude yourself with the idea that there is a great deal for you to

do and to feel in order to fit yourself for coming to Christ. All such fitness is nothing but unfitness! All that you can do to make yourself ready for Christ to save you is to make yourself more unready! The fitness for washing is to be filthythe fitness for being relieved is to be poor and needy. The fitness for being healed is to be sickand the fitness for being pardoned is to be a sinner! If you are a sinnerand I guarantee you that you arehere is the Inspired Apostolic declaration, This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And to that declaration we may add our Lords own words, He that believes on Him is not condemned. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. Oh that God would give all of you the Grace to receive this gracious Gospel, whose requirements are so tenderly and so mercifully brought down to your low estate!   
IV. The fourth point which illustrates Gods tender mercy is this THERE IS GREAT TENDERNESS ABOUT ALL THE ARGUMENTS OF THE GOSPEL.  
How does the Gospel speak to men? It tells them, first, of the Fathers love. You never can forget, if you have once heard or read it, the story of the prodigal son who wasted his substance with riotous living. You remember how he said, when he was feeding the swine, I will arise and go to my father. That was a Divine touch and showed the Saviors master hand when He put it in and again when He added this affecting description, When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. Sinner, that is Gods way of coming to meet you! If you want to meet Him, He sees that yearning desire and that trembling wish of yours and He will come more than half way to meet you! Yes, it is because He comes all the way that you are able to go any part of the way!   
How else does the Gospel talk to men? Why, it tells them of the great Shepherds love. He lost one sheep from His flock and He left the 99 in the wilderness while He went to seek the one which had gone astray. And when He had found it, He laid it on His shoulders, rejoicing, and when He came home, He said to His friends and neighbors, Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost. That lost sheep was the type of an unconverted sinner, and that Shepherd is the bleeding Savior who came to seek and to save that which was lost!   
Ought not such arguments as these prevail with you? When the Gospel seeks to win a sinners heartits master plea comes from the heart, the blood, the wounds, the death of the Incarnate God, Jesus Christ, the compassionate Savior! The thunders of Sinai might drive you away from God, but the groans of Calvary ought to draw you to Him! Gods tender mercy appeals even to mans self-interest and says to him, Why will you die? Your sins will kill you. Why do you cling to them? It says to him, The pains of Hell are terrible. And it only mentions them in love, so that the sinner may never have to feel them, but may escape from them. Mercy also adds, The Grace of God is boundless, so your sin may be pardoned. The Heaven of God is wide and large, so there is room for you there. Mercy thus pleads with the Sinner, God will be glorified in your salvation, for He delight in mercy, and He says that as He lives, He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.   
I cannot enlarge upon this point, but must be content with saying that all Scripture proves Gods love to sinners. Almost every page of Scripture speaks to you, Sinner, with a message of love! And even when God speaks in terrible language, warning men to flee from the wrath to come, there is always this gracious purpose in itthat men may be persuaded not to ruin themselves and may, through the abounding mercy of God, accept the free gift of eternal life instead of willfully choosing the wages of sin which must assuredly be death!   
O my dear Hearers, as I think of some of you who are unconverted, I can hardly tell you how sad I feel when I recollect against what tenderness you have sinned! God has been very good to many of you. You have been kept from the depths of poverty, you have even been dandled on the knee of prosperity. Yet you have forgotten God! Others of you have had many Providential helps in fighting the battle of life. You have been often Divinely assisted when you were sick, or when your poor wife and children were all but in need. God very graciously stepped in to supply your needs, yet now you talk to your friends about how lucky you have been, whereas the truth is that God has been tenderly merciful towards you! Yet you have not even seen His hand in your prosperity and, instead of giving God the glory for it, you have ascribed it to that heathen goddess, Luck. God has been patient and gentle with you as a nurse might be toward a wayward child, yet you altogether ignore Him or turn away from Him! You were sick, a little while ago, and God raised you up again to health and strengthis there still no burning of your heart towards God? I pray that Gods Grace may work in you the change that no pleading of mine can ever produce, and that you may say, I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned. If you heartily make that confession to your Heavenly Father, He will forgive you and welcome you as freely as the father in the parable welcomed the returning prodigal!   
V. The last point of the tenderness of Gods mercy that I can now speak of is this, THE TENDERNESS OF ITS APPLICATIONS AND OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS.   
What does God do for sinners? Well, when they trust in Jesus, He forgives all their sins, without any upbraiding or drawbacks. I have sometimes thought that if I had been the father of a prodigal son, I could have forgiven him when he came home and I hope I should have very freely done so. But I do not think I could ever have treated him in quite the same way that I treated his elder brother. I mean thisI would have had them sit at the same table, and feast on the same foodbut I think that when market-day came round, I would have said to my younger son, I shall not trust you with the money. I must send your elder brother to the market with that, for you might run away with it. Perhaps I would not go so far as to say this, but I think I would feel it, for such a son as that one would be rather suspicious for a long time. Yet see how differently God deals with us! After some of us have been great sinners and He has forgiven us, He puts us in trust with the Gospel and bids us go and preach it to our follow sinners! Look at John Bunyana swearing, drinking profligate playing at tip-cat on Sundaysyet, when the Lord had forgiven him, He did not say to him, Now, Master John, you will have to sit in the back seats all your life. You shall go to Heaven, I will provide you a place there, but I cannot make as much use of you as I can of some who have been kept from such sins as you have committed. Oh, no! He is put in the front rank of the Lords servants, an angels pen is given to him that he may write The Pilgrims Progress, and he has the high honor of lying for nearly 13 years in prison for the Truths sake! And among all the saints there is scarcely one who is greater than John Bunyan! Look at the Apostle Paul, too. He called himself the chief of sinners, yet his Lord and Father made him, after his conversion, such an eminent servant of Christ that he could truly write, In nothing am I behind the very chief of Apostles, though I am nothing.   
It is a proof of great tenderness on Gods part that He gives liberally and upbraids not. He not only forgives, but He also forgets! He says, Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. And although we may have been the vilest of the vile, He makes no drawbacks on that account. I have known a father who has said to his bankrupt son, Now, you young scapegrace, I will set you up in business again, but I have already lost so much money through you that I shall have to make a difference in my will, for I cannot give all this to you and then treat you as I treat your brother. But, blessed be God, He makes no difference in His will! He has not said that He will give the front seats in Heaven to those who have sinned less than others have done, and put the greater sinners somewhere in the background. Oh no! They shall all be with Jesus where He is and shall behold and participate in His Glory! There is not one Heaven for the great sinners and another for the little onesbut there is the same Heaven for those who have been the greatest sinners, but who have repented and trusted in Jesus, as there is for those who have been kept from running into the same excess of riot. Let us admire the wondrous tenderness of Divine Grace in its dealings with the very chief of sinners! When God deigns to cleanse a sinner, He does not partly wash him, but He takes away all his sin! He does not partly comfort him, but He loads him with loving kindness and gives him all that his heart could wish! Oh, that sinners could be persuaded to come unto Him for His full and free forgiveness!   
Possibly somebody here says, If God is so tender in mercy towards those who come to Him through Christ, I should be glad if you could explain why His mercy has not been extended to me. I have been seeking the Lord for months! I am at His House as often as I can be. I delight to hear the Gospel preached and I long for it to be blessed to me. I have been reading the Scriptures and searching for precious promises to suit my case, but I cannot find them. I have been praying for a long while, but my prayers still remain unanswered. I cannot get any peace! I wish I could. I have been trying to believe, but I cannot. Well, my Friend, let me tell you a story that I heard the other day. I cannot vouch for its truth, but it will serve for an illustration for me. There were two drunken sailors who wanted to go across a narrow inlet. They got into a boat and began to row, in their wild drunken way, but they did not appear to make any headway. It was not far across, so they ought to have been on the other side in a quarter of an hour, but they were not across in an hour, nor yet in several hours! One of them said, I believe the boat is bewitched. The other one said he thought

they were and I suppose they were, through the liquor they had been drinking! At last, the morning light came and one of them, who had become sober by that time, looked over the side of the boat and then called out to his mate, Why, Sandy, you never pulled up the anchor! They had been tugging at the oars all night long, but had not pulled up the anchor! You smile at their folly and I do not regret that you do because you can now catch the meaning of what I am saying. There is many a man who is, as it were, tugging away at the oars with his prayers, and his Bible reading, and his going to Chapel, and his trying to believe. But, like those drunken sailors, he has not pulled up the anchor! That is to say, he is either holding fast to his own supposed righteousness, or else he is clinging to some old sin of his which he cannot give up. Ah, my dear Friend! You must pull up the anchor whether it holds you to your sins or to your self-righteousness! That anchor, still down out of sight, fully accounts for all your lost labor and fruitless anxiety. Pull up that anchor and there will soon be a happy end of all your troublesand you will find God to be full of tender mercy and abundant Grace even to you! May it be so, for our Lord Jesus Christs sake! Amen

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:   
**ISAIAH 54.**

The precious promises contained in this chapter belong in the first place to the Church of God, but, as that which belongs to the Church really belongs to every member of it, we shall not be acting dishonestly with the Scripture if we who are Believers, personally take home to ourselves every drop of comfort that we can find here!

Verse 1. Sing, O barren, you that did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child. Sing, even though you are barren! Do not postpone your song until Gods promise is fulfilled unto you, but sing even while you are desolate and forlornand let faith pitch the key-note. Let me, therefore, entreat any of you who are disconsolate and sad, to give heed to the words of the Prophet and even now begin to sing! Give to God songs in the nightimitate the nightingale and sing though not a star is to be seen!

1 *.* For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the LORD. After all, we who have the deepest sorrow have the highest joy, and if we are sometimes desolate, we need not wish to change with those who always keep the even tenor of their way. If we have great downs, we also have great ups! If the valleys are deep, blessed be God, the hills are high and the view from their summits is glorious! Let us be thankful even if our lot is a hard one, if we are the Lords, for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the Lord.

2, 3. Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations: spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes; for you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and your seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. This is another act of faithnot only singing before the mercy comes, but getting ready to receive it before it is in sight, stretching the curtains and the cords in order to have room to house the blessing which has not yet arrived! Carnal reason says, When we have the children, we will enlarge the tent. When we have gathered the congregation, we will build a House of Prayer. But faith says, I will enlarge my heart that it may be able to take in the blessing which is sure to come. I will be big with expectation. I will open my mouth widenot when I see the blessing, but before I see it, that God may place the blessing in my open, empty mouth. May the Lord graciously give us enlarged expectations, for, according to our faith, so shall it be unto us!

4. Fear not; for you shall not be ashamed: neither be you confounded; for you shall not be put to shame: for you shall forget the shame of your youth, and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more. Here is a third line for faith to run upon, namely, that of courage. Before you are strong, before you have been lifted up out of your weakness, be of good courage and fear not, for if you walk by faith and trust in the Lord with all your heart, you shall never have any cause to be ashamed of having done so. The Lord will always honor your faith because your faith honors Him. Be of good cheer, for you shall yet have good reason to rejoice and all those days that you are now ashamed to think of, in which you lived without God, and without Christyour days of sad and terrible widowhoodshall be so completely surpassed by the abundance of mercy which you shall receive from the Lord that you shall not remember them anymore!

5. For your Maker is your husband; the LORD of Hosts is His name; and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. The God of the whole earth shall He be called. Oh, how blessed it is that Jehovah, Israels God, the Lord of Hosts, is the God of the whole earthso that we poor Gentiles may come and hide under the shadow of His wings! And what a joy it is to all Believers that this great God has united us in the sacred bonds of marriage with Himself! Your Maker is your husband. Oh, what bountiful provision will such a Husband make for us! How well will He comfort us! How abundantly will He bless us! So let our hearts be glad in Him.

6. For the LORD has called you as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when you were refused, says your God. Some of you know what it is to have had your affections betrayed and your hearts broken by unfaithful friends. Now the Lord calls you to come close to Himself that you may prove His faithfulness and so forget your past sorrows in your present and future joy.

7, 8. 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. These choice words do not need any explanation! This blessed plaster only needs to be applied to the wounded heart and it will heal it at once. If the Lord will but speak these sentences into our souls, so that we may know that they are really meant for us, our rapture will be complete! Let me read these verses againFor 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 Jehovah, your Redeemeryour Godyour next of kinyour Advocate and Champion! What a blessed name is this and what a wonderful combination is thisJehovah, your next of kin!

9, 10. For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed. There is nothing really stable about themall things that are visible must melt and flow away.

10. 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. What gracious words are these! What majesty there is in such consoling sentences as these! They remind us of Mr. Paxton Hoods lines

*All His words are music, though they make me weep, Infinitely tender, infinitely deep.*

11. O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted. Where are you? Have you come in here to seek the consolation you cannot find anywhere else? Then see how God lays Himself out to comfort you! He has put into human language the true sympathy for you that He feels in His heart. And again He says to you, O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted.

11. Behold, I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires. You shall have done with the rough tossing of the troubled sea and you shall come to landto a royal city which has foundations of sapphireto a kings palace where even the stones shall be stained with rich vermilion such as only princes use in their costly buildingsI will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires.

12. And I will make your windows of agates, and your gates of carbuncles, and all your borders of pleasant stones. See what riches belong to the Church of the living God! And, as I have already reminded you, everything that belongs to the Church belongs to every member of it. So we expect to see our Lords face through a window of agate and to go through a gate of carbuncle to meet Him in the place of communion which shall itself be enriched with all manner of precious stones. Yes, and everything that has to do with useven the very borders of our life shall be laid with pleasant stones. Happy are all you who are the favorites of Heaven, the Beloved of the Lord! Blessed are you even in your shop and your storeblessed in the common things of your life, as well as in the choicest parts of your Christian experience!

13. And all your children shall be taught of the LORD. Our children are often our greatest care. We ask, How shall they be educated? Where shall we place our boys and our girls? Put them under the care of God, for, as Elihu said to Job, Who teaches like Him?

13, 14. And great shall be the peace of your children. In righteousness shall you be established: you shall be far from oppression; for you shall not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near you. The man who has the fear of God within his heart need have no fear of anybody else

*Fear Him you saints, and you will then   
Have nothing else to fear!   
Make His service your delight*

**Hell make your needs His care.**   
15. Behold, they shall surely gather together. You will have enemies, even if you lead the most blameless life that can be lived, for the absolutely Blameless One had many cruel enemies who hounded Him to death.

15 *.* But not by Me. God is not with them, for He is on your side.

15. Whoever shall gather together against you shall fall for your sake. Oh, how often, and how mysteriously, and how terribly God has smitten the enemies of His people! The hand of the Lord has gone out against them as it went out against Sennacherib and his host in the days of good King Hezekiah.   
16. Behold, I have created the smith that blows the coals in the fire, and that brings forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the spoiler to destroy. Even over the most wicked and the most powerful of men there is the supremacy of God! And deep and mysterious though the Doctrine is, yet Divine Predestination applies even to such sinners as Judas Iscariot and the vilest of the vile in all times. And herein is our confidencethat God is greater than death, and the devil, and Hell! He is supreme above all the malice and craft and cruelty of the worst and the greatest of men.   
17. No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper  
*Neither two-edged sword nor falchion bright, Nor barbed arrow that flies by night*   
No weapon of any kindhowever cunningly made, or however deftly handledno weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.   
17. And every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn. The tonguethat worst of weapons, whose wicked words are sharper than swordsis like a condemned criminal.   
17. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. Did I not rightly say that these precious promises belong not only to the whole Church of God as a body, but also to each individual member of that Church?   
17. And their righteousness is of Me, says the LORD. If, then, your righteousness is found in God, in God you shall find everything else that you need for time and for eternity! God grant this unto each one of us for His dear names sake! Amen.

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.

NO ROOM FOR CHRIST IN THE INN   
NO. 485

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 21, 1862,   
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And she brought forth her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. Because there was no room for them in the inn.   
Luke 2:7.**

IT was necessary that it should be distinctly proven, beyond all dispute, that our Lord sprang out of Judah. It was necessary, also, that He should be born in Bethlehem-Ephratah, according to the Word of the

Lord which He spoke by His servant Micah. But how could a public recognition of the lineage of an obscure carpenter and an unknown maiden be procured? What interest could the keepers of registers be supposed to take in two such humble persons?

As for the second matter, Mary lived at Nazareth in Galilee and there seemed every probability that the birth would take place there. Indeed, the period of her delivery was so near that, unless absolutely compelled,

she would not be likely to undertake a long and tedious journey to the southern province of Judea. How are these two matters to be arranged? Can one turn of the wheel effect two purposes? It can be done! It shall be done! The official stamp of the Roman empire shall be affixed to the pedigree of the coming Son of David and Bethlehem shall behold His nativity.

A little tyrant, Herod, by some show of independent spirit, offends the greater tyrant, Augustus. Augustus informs him that he shall no longer treat him as a friend but as a vassal. And albeit Herod makes the most abject submission, and his friends at the Roman court intercede for him,

yet Augustus, to show his displeasure, orders a census to be taken of all the Jewish people, in readiness for a contemplated taxation, which, however, was not carried out till some ten years after. Even the winds and waves are not more fickle than a tyrants will.

But the Ruler of tempests knows how to rule the perverse spirits of princes. The Lord our God has a bit for the wildest war horse and a hook for the most terrible leviathan. Autocratic Caesars are but puppets

moved with invisible strings, mere drudges to the King of kings. Augustus must be made offended with Herod. He is constrained to tax the people. It is imperative that a census be takenno, it is of necessity that inconvenient, harsh and tyrannical regulations should be published and every person must repair to the town to which he was reputed to belong.

Thus, Mary is brought to Bethlehem. Jesus Christ is born as appointed and, moreover, He is recognized officially as being descended from David by the fact that His mother came to Bethlehem as being of that lineage. She remained there and returned to Galilee without having

her claims questioned, although the jealousy of all the women of the clan

would have been aroused had an intruder ventured to claim a place among the few females to whom the birth of Messiah was now, by express prophecies, confined. Remark here the wisdom of the God of Providence and believe that all things are ordered well.   
When all persons of the house of David were thus driven to Bethlehem, the scanty accommodation of the little town would soon be exhausted. Doubtless, friends entertained their friends till their houses were all full, but Joseph had no such willing kinsmen in the town. There was the caravanserai, which was provided in every village, where free accommodation was given to travelers. This, too, was full, for coming from a distance and compelled to travel slowly, the humble couple had arrived late in the day. The rooms within the great brick square were already occupied with families.

There remained no better lodging, even for a woman in travail, than one of the meaner spaces appropriated to beasts of burden. The stall of the ass was the only place where the Child could be born. By hanging a curtain at its front, and perhaps tethering the animal on the outer side to block the passage, the needed seclusion could be obtained. And so, here, in the stable, was the King of Glory born and in the manger was He laid.

My business, this morning is to lead your meditations to the stable at Bethlehem, that you may see this great sightthe Savior in the manger, and think over the reason for this lowly bedbecause there was no room for them in the inn.

I. I shall commence by remarking that THERE WERE OTHER REASONS WHY CHRIST SHOULD BE LAID IN THE MANGER.  
1. I think it was intended thus to show forth His humiliation. He came, according to prophecy, to be despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was to be without form or comeliness, a root out of a dry ground. Would it have been fitting that the Man who was to die naked on the Cross should be robed in purple at His birth? Would it not have been inappropriate that the Redeemer who was to be buried in a borrowed tomb, should be born anywhere but in the most humble shed, and housed anywhere but in the most ignoble manner?   
The manger and the Cross standing at the two extremes of the Saviors earthly life seem most fit and congruous the one to the other. He is to

wear through life a peasants garb. He is to associate with fishermen. The lowly are to be His disciples. The cold mountains are often to be His only bed. He is to say, Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head. Nothing, therefore, could he more fitting than that in His season of humiliation, when He laid aside all His glory, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and condescended even to the mean estate, He should be laid in a manger.

2. By being in a manger He was declared to be the king of the poor.

They, doubtless, were at once able to recognize His relationship to them, from the position in which they found Him. I believe it excited feelings of the most tender brotherly kindness in the minds of the shepherds, when the angel saidThis shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the Child wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger. In the eyes of the poor, imperial robes excite no affectiona man in their own garb attracts their confidence.

With what pertinacity will workingmen cleave to a leader of their own order, believing in him because he knows their toils, sympathizes in their sorrows, and feels an interest in all their concerns! Great commanders have readily won the hearts of their soldiers by sharing their hardships and roughing it as if they belonged to the ranks. The King of men, who was born in Bethlehem, was not exempted in His infancy from the common calamities of the poor. No, His lot was even worse than theirs. I

think I hear the shepherds comments on the manger-birth: Ah, says one to his fellow, then He will not be like Herod the tyrant.   
He will remember the manger and feel for the poor. Poor helpless Infant, I   
feel a love for Him even now. What miserable accommodation this cold   
world yields its Savior. It is not a Caesar that is born today. He will never   
trample down our fields with His armies, or slaughter our flocks for His   
courtiers. He will be the poor mans Friend, the peoples Monarch. According to the words of our shepherd-king, He shall judge the poor of the

people. He shall save the children of the needy.

Surely the shepherds and such as theythe poor of the earth, perceived at once that here was the plebeian kingnoble in descent, but still as the Lord has called Him, one chosen out of the people. Great Prince of Peace! The manger was Your royal cradle! Therein were You presented to all nations as Prince of our race, before whose Presence there is neither barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free. But You are Lord of all. Kings, your gold and silver would have been lavished on Him if you

had known the Lord of Glory but inasmuch as you knew Him not, He  
was declared with demonstration to be a leader and a witness to the people.

The things which are not, under Him shall bring to nothing the things that are, and the things that are despised which God has chosen, shall under His leadership break in pieces the might and pride and majesty of human grandeur.

3. Further, in thus being laid in a manger, He did, as it were, give an invitation to the most humble to come to Him. We might tremble to approach a throne but we cannot fear to approach a manger. Had we seen the Master at first riding in state through the streets of Jerusalem with garments laid in the way and the palm branches strewed and the people crying, Hosanna, we might have thought, though even the thought would have been wrong, that He was not approachable. Even there, riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass, He was so meek and lowly, that the

young children clustered about Him with their boyish Hosannas.

Never could there be a being more approachable than Christ. No rough guards pushed poor petitioners away. No array of officious friends were allowed to keep off the importunate widow or the man who clamored that his son might be made whole. The hem of His garment was always trailing where sick folk could reach it, and He, Himself, had a hand always ready to touch the disease, an ear to catch the faintest accents of misery, a soul going forth everywhere in rays of mercy, even as the light of the

sun streams on every side beyond that orb itself.

By being laid in a manger He proved Himself a priest taken from among men, one who has suffered like His Brethren and therefore can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Of Him it was said, He does eat and drink with publicans and sinners. This Man receives sinners and eats with them. Even as an Infant, by being laid in a manger, He was set forth as the sinners Friend. Come to Him, you that are weary and heavy laden! Come to Him, you that are broken in spirit, you who are bowed down in soul! Come to Him, you that despise yourselves and are despised of others!

Come to Him, publican and harlot! Come to Him, thief and drunkard! In the manger there He lies, unguarded from your touch and unshielded from your gaze. Bow the knee and kiss the Son of God. Accept Him as your Savior, for He puts Himself into that manger that you may approach Him. The throne of Solomon might awe you, but the manger of the Son of David must invite you.

4. Methinks there was yet another mystery. You remember, Brethren, that this place was free to all. It was an inn, and please remember the inn in this case was not like our hotels, where accommodation and provision must be paid for. In the early and simple ages of the world, every man considered it an honor to entertain a stranger. Afterwards, as traveling became more common, many desired to shift the honor and pleasure upon their neighborswhy should they engross all the dignity of hospitality?

Further on still, some one person was appointed in each town and village and was expected to entertain strangers in the name of the rest. But, as the ages grew less simple and the pristine glow of brotherly love cooled down, the only provision made was the erection of a huge square block, arranged in rooms for the travelers and with lower stages for the beasts. And here, with a certain provision of water, and in some cases chopped straw for the cattle, the traveler must make himself as comfortable as he could.

He had not to purchase admittance to the caravanserai, for it was free to all and the stable especially so. Now, Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ was born in the stable of the inn to show how free He is to all comers. The Gospel is preached to every creature and shuts out none. We may say of the invitations of Holy Scripture, None are excluded but those

*Who do themselves exclude.   
Welcome the learned and polite,   
The ignorant and rude.   
Though Jesus Grace can save the prince, The poor may take their share.   
No mortal has a just pretense   
To perish in despairs.*

Class exclusions are unknown here and the prerogatives of caste are not acknowledged. No forms of etiquette are required in entering a stable. It cannot be an offense to enter the stable of a public caravanserai. So, if you desire to come to Christ you may come to Him just as you are. You may come now. Whosoever among you has the desire in his heart to trust Christ is free to do it. Jesus is free to you. He will receive you. He will welcome you with gladness and to show this, I think, the young Child was cradled in a manger.

We know that sinners often imagine that they are shut out. Oftentimes the convicted conscience will write bitter things against itself and deny   
its part and lot in mercys stores. Brother, if God has not shut you out,

do not shut yourself out. Until you can find it written in the Book that you may not trust Christ. Until you can quote a positive passage in which it is written that He is not able to save you, I pray you take that heavenly word wherein it is writtenHe is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Venture on that promise. Come to Christ in the strength and faith of it, and you shall find Him free to all

comers.

5. We have not yet exhausted the reasons why the Son of Man was laid in a manger. It was at the manger that the beasts were fed. And does the Savior lie where weary beasts receive their provender and shall there not be a mystery here? Alas, there are some men who have become so brutal through sin, so utterly depraved by their lusts, that to their own consciences everything manlike has departed. But even to such, the

remedies of Jesus, the Great Physician, will apply.

We are constantly reading in our papers of men who are called incorrigible, and it is fashionable just now to demand ferociously that these men should be treated with unmingled severity. Some few years ago all the world went mad with a spurious humanity, crying out that gentleness would reform the brutal thief whom harsh punishments would hopelessly harden. Now the current has turned, and everybody is demanding the abandonment of the present system. I am no advocate for

treating criminals daintily. Let their sin bring them a fair share of pun  
ishment. But if by any means they can be reformed, pray, let the means be tried.

The day will come when the paroxysm of this garroting fever is over, and we shall blush to think that we were frightened by silly fears into a dangerous interference with a great and good work which up to now has been successfully carried on. It is a fact that under the present system, which (abating some faults that it may be well to cure) is an admirable one, crime is growing less frequent and the class of gross offenders has been materially lessened.

Whereas in 1844 18,490 convicts were transported, in 1860 the corresponding number was 11,533 and that notwithstanding the increase of the population. The ticket-of-leave system, where the public would employ the convicts and so give them a chance of gaining a new character,

worked so well that little more than one percent in a year were re

convicted and even now only five per cent per annum are found returning to crime and to prison. Well, now, if the five percent receive no good, or even become worse, ought we not to consider the other ninety-five and pause awhile before we give loose to our vengeance and exchange a Christian system of hopeful mercy for the old barbarous rule of unmitigated severity?

Beware, fellow citizens, beware of restoring the old idea that men can sin beyond hope of reformation, or you will generate criminals worse

than those which now trouble us. The laws of Draco must ever be failures but fear not for the ultimate triumph of plans which a Christian spirit has suggested. I have wandered from the subjectI thought I might save some from the crime of opposing true philanthropy on account of a sudden panic. But I will return at once to the manger and the Babe.

I believe our Lord was laid in the manger where the beasts were fed, to

show that even beast-like men may come to Him and live. No creature can be so degraded that Christ cannot lift it up. Fall it may, and seem to fall most certainly to Hell, but the long and strong arm of Christ can reach it even in its most desperate degradation. He can bring it up from apparently hopeless ruin. If there is one who has strolled in here this morning whom society abhors and who abhors himself, my Master in the stable with the beasts presents Himself as able to save the vilest of the vile and to accept the worst of the worst even now. Believe on Him and He will make you a new creature.

6. But as Christ was laid where beasts were fed, you will please remember that after He was gone beasts fed there again. It was only His Presence which could glorify the manger and here we learn that if Christ were taken away, the world would go back to its former heathen darkness. Civilization itself would die out, at least that part of it which really civilizes man, if the religion of Jesus could be extinguished. If Christ were taken away from the human heart, the most holy would become debased again, and those who claim kinship with angels would soon prove that they have relationship to devils.

The manger, I say, would be a manger for beasts still, if the Lord of Glory were withdrawn. And we should go back to our sins and our lusts if Christ should once take away His Divine Grace and leave us to ourselves. For these reasons which I have mentioned, methinks, Christ was

laid in a manger.

II. But still the text says that He was laid in a manger because there was no room for Him in the inn and this leads us to the second remark, THAT THERE WERE OTHER PLACES BESIDES THE INN WHICH HAD NO ROOM FOR CHRIST. The palaces of emperors and the halls of kings afforded the royal stranger no refuge? Alas, my Brethren, seldom is there room for Christ in palaces! How could the kings of earth receive the Lord? He is the Prince of Peace and they delight in war!

He breaks their bows and cuts their spears in sunder. He burns their war chariots in the fire. How could kings accept the humble Savior? They love grandeur and pomp, and He is all simplicity and meekness. He is a carpenters son, and the fishermans companion. How can princes find room for the new-born monarch? Why, He teaches us to do to others as we would that they should do to us! And this is a thing which kings would find very hard to reconcile with the knavish tricks of politics and the grasping designs of ambition. O great ones of the earth, I am but little astonished that amid your glories, and pleasures, and wars, and

councils, you forget the Anointed and cast out the Lord of All.

There is no room for Christ with the kings. Look throughout the kingdoms of the earth now and with here and there an exception it is still trueThe kings of the earth stand up and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed. In Heaven we shall see here and there a monarch. But ah, how few. Indeed a child might write of them, Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen.

State-chambers, cabinets, throne-rooms, and royal palaces are about as little frequented by Christ as the jungles and swamps of India by the cautious traveler. He frequents cottages far more often than regal residences, for there is no room for Jesus Christ in regal halls

*When the Eternal bows the skies   
To visit earthly things,   
With scorn Divine He turns His eyes   
From towers of haughty kings.   
He bids His awful chariot roll   
Far downward from the skies,   
To visit every humble soul   
With pleasure in His eyes.*

But there were senators, there were forums of political discussion, there were the places where the representatives of the people make the laws, was there no room for Christ there? Alas, my Brethren, none. And to this day there is very little room for Christ in parliaments. How seldom is religion recognized by politicians! Of course a State religion, if it will consent to be a poor, tame, powerless thing, a lion with its ties all drawn, its mane all shaven off and its claws all trimmedyes, that may be recognized. But the true Christ, and they that follow Him and dare to obey His laws in an evil generation, what room is there for such?

Christ and His Gospeloh, this is sectarianism and is scarcely worthy of the notice of contempt. Who pleads for Jesus in the Senate? Is not His religion, under the name of sectarianism, the great terror of all parties? Who quotes His golden rule as a direction for prime ministers, or preaches Christ-like forgiveness as a rule for national policy? One or two will give Him a good word, but if it is put to the vote whether the Lord Jesus should be obeyed or not, it will be many a day before the ayes have it. Parties, policies, place-hunters and pleasure-seekers exclude the Representative of Heaven from a place among representatives of Earth.

Might there not be found some room for Christ in what is called good society? Were there not in Bethlehem some people that were very respectable, who kept themselves aloof from the common multitude? Persons of reputation and standing? Could not they find room for Christ? Ah, dear Friends, it is too much the case that there is no room for Him in what is called good society. There is room for all the silly little forms by which men choose to trammel themselvesroom for the vain niceties of etiquette, room for frivolous conversation, room for the adoration of the body. And there is room for the setting up of this, and that, as the idol of the hourbut there is too little room for Christand it is far from fashionable to follow the Lord fully.

The advent of Christ would be the last thing which society would desire. The very mention of His name by the lips of love would cause a strange sensation. Should you begin to talk about the things of Christ in many a circle, you would be tabooed at once. I will never ask that man to my house again, so-and-so would sayif he must bring his religion with him. Folly and finery, rank and honor, jewels and glitter, frivolity and fashionall report that there is no room for Jesus in their abodes.

But is there not room for Him on the exchange? Cannot He be taken to the marts of commerce? Here are the shop-keepers of a shop-keeping nationis there not room for Christ here? Ah, dear Friends, how little of the spirit and life and doctrine of Christ can be found here! The trader finds it inconvenient to be too scrupulous. The merchant often discovers that if he is to make a fortune he must break his conscience. How many there arewell, I will not say they tell lies directly but still, still, stillI had better say it plainlythey do lie indirectly with a vengeance!

Who does not know, as he rides along, that there must be many liars abroad? For almost every house you see is, The cheapest house in London, which can hardly befull sure they cannot all be the cheapest! What sharp practice some indulge in! What puffery and falsehood! What cunning and sleight of hand! What woes would my Master pronounce on some of you if He looked into your shop windows, or stood behind your counters. Bankruptcies, swindling, frauds are so abundant that in hosts of cases there is no room for Jesus in the market or the shop.

Then there are the schools of the philosophers, surely they will entertain Him. The wise men will find in Him incarnate wisdom. He, who as a youth is to become the teacher of doctors, who will sit down and ask them questions and receive their answers, surely He will find room at once among the Grecian sages, and men of sense and wit will honor Him. Room for Him, Socrates and Plato? Stoics and Epicureans give way! And you, you teachers of Israel, vacate your seats. If there is no room for this Child without your going, go. We must have Him in the schools of philosophy, even if we have to put you all away.

No, dear Friends but it is not so. There is very little room for Christ in colleges and universities, very little room for Him in the seats of learning. How often learning helps men to raise objections to Christ! Too often learning is the forge where the nails are made for Christs crucifixion. Too often human wit has become the craftsman who has pointed the spear and made the shaft with which His heart should be pierced. We must say itphilosophy, falsely so called, (for true philosophy, if it were handled aright, must ever be Christs friend)philosophy, falsely so called, has done mischief to Christ but seldom has   
it served His cause.

A few with splendid talents, a few of the erudite and profound have bowed like children at the feet of the Babe of Bethlehem, and have been honored in bowing there. But too many, conscious of their knowledge, stiff and stern in their conceit of wisdom, have saidWho is Christ, that we should acknowledge Him? They found no room for Him in the schools.

But there was surely one place where he could goit was the Sanhedrim, where the elders sit. Or could He not be housed in the priestly chamber where the priests assemble with the Levites. Was there not room for Him in the temple or the synagogue? No, He found no shelter there. It was there, His whole life long, that He found His most ferocious enemies. Not the common multitude but the priests were the instigators of His death! The priests moved the people to say, Not this Man, but Barabbas. The priests paid out their shekels to bribe the popular voice, and then Christ was hounded to His death.

Surely there ought to have been room for Him in the Church of His own people. But there was not. Too often in the priestly Church, when once it becomes recognized and mounts to dignity, there is no room for Christ. I allude not now to any one denomination, but take the whole sweep of Christendom. It is strange that when the Lord comes to His own, His own receive Him not. The most accursed enemies of true religion have been the men who pretended to be its advocates.

It is little marvel when bishops undermine the popular faith in revelation. This is neither their first nor last offense. Who burned the martyrs and made Smithfield a field of blood, a burning fiery furnace, a great altar for the Most High God? Why, those who professed to be anointed of the Lord, whose shaven crowns had received Episcopal benediction. Who put John Bunyan in prison? Who chased such men as Owen and the Puritans from their pulpits? Who harried the Covenanters upon the mountains? Who, Sirs, but the professed messengers of Heaven and priests of

God?

Who have hunted the baptized saints in every land and hunt them still in many a continental state? The priests. The priests. There is no room for Christ with the prophets of Baal, the servants of Babylon. The false hirelings that are not Christs shepherds and love not His sheep, have ever been the most ferocious enemies of our God and of His Christ. There is no room for Him where His name is chanted in solemn hymns and His image lifted up amid smoke of incense. Go where you will, and there is no space for the Prince of Peace but with the humble and contrite spirits which by Divine Grace He prepares to yield Him shelter.

III. But now for our third remark, THE INN ITSELF HAD NO ROOM FOR HIM. And this was the main reason why He must be laid in a manger. What can we find in modern times which stands in the place of the inn? Well, there is public sentiment free to all. In this free land, men speak of what they like and there is a public opinion upon every subject. And you know there is free toleration in this country to everything permit me to say, toleration to everything but Christ. You will discover that the persecuting spirit is now as much abroad as ever.

There are still men at whom it is most fashionable to sneer. We never scoff at Christians now-a-days. We do not sneer at that respectable title, lest we should lose our own honor. We do not now-a-days talk against the followers of Jesus under that name. Nobut we have found out a way of doing it more safely. There is a pretty word of modern invention a very pretty wordthe word Sectarian. Do you know what it means? A sectarian means a true Christiana man who can afford to keep a conscience and does not mind suffering for it. A man who, whatever he finds to be in that old Book, believes it and acts upon it and is zealous for it.

I believe that the men aimed at under the term, sectarians, are the true followers of Christ and that the sneers and jeers and all the nonsense that you are always reading and hearing, is really aimed at the Christian, the true Christian, only he is disguised and nicknamed by the word sectarian. I would give not a farthing for your religion, no, not even the turn of a rusty nail, unless you will sometimes win that title. If Gods Word is true, every atom of it, then we should act upon it. And whatever the Lord commands, we should diligently keep and obey, remembering that our Master tells us if we break one of the least of His commandments and teach men so, we shall be least in His kingdom.

We ought to be very jealous, very precise, very anxious, that even in the least significant of our Saviors laws, we may obey, having our eyes up to Him as the eyes of servants are to their mistresses. But if you do this, you will find you are not tolerated and you will get the cold shoulder in society. A zealous Christian will find as truly a Cross to carry now-adays, as in the days of Simon the Cyrenian. If you will hold your tongue, if you will leave sinners to perish, if you will never endeavor to propagate your faith, if you will silence all witnessing for the Truth of God, if, in

fact, you will renounce all the attributes of a Christian, if you will cease   
to be what a Christian must be, then the world will say, Ah, that is right. This is the religion we like.

But if you will believe, believe firmly, and if you let your belief actuate your life and if your belief is so precious that you feel compelled to spread it, then at once you will find that there is no room for Christ even in the inn of public sentiment, where everything else is received. Be an infidel and none will treat you contemptuously. But be a Christian and many will despise you. There was no room for Him in the inn.

How little room is there for Christ, too, in general conversation, which is also like an inn. We talk about many things. A man may now-a-days talk of any subject he pleases. No one can stop him and say, There is a spy catching your words. He will report you to some central authority. Speech is very free in this land. But, ah, how little room is there for Christ in general talk! Even on Sunday afternoon how little room there is for Christ in some professed Christians houses.

They will talk about ministers, tell strange anecdotes about them perhaps invent a few, or, at least, garnish the old ones and add to them and make them a little more brilliant. They will talk about the Sunday school, or the various agencies in connection with the Churchbut how little they say about Christ! And if someone should in conversation make this remark, Could we not speak upon the Godhead and manhood, the finished work and righteousness, the ascension, or the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ? Why we should see many, who even profess to be followers of Christ, who would hold up their heads and say, Why, dear, that man is quite a fanatic, or else he would not think of introducing such a subject as that into general conversation. No, there is no room for Him in the inn.

To this day He can find but little access there. I address many who are working men. You are employed among a great many artisans day after day. Do you not find, BrethrenI know you dothat there is very little room for Christ in the workshop. There is room there for everything else. There is room for swearing. There is room for drunkenness. There is room for lewd conversation. There is room for politics, slanders, or infidelitiesbut there is no room for Christ.

Too many of our working men think religion would be an encumbrance, a chain, a miserable prison to them. They can frequent the theater, or listen in a lecture hall, but the House of God is too dreary for them. I wish I were not compelled to say so, but truly, in our factories, workshops and foundries, there is no room for Christ. The world is elbowing and pushing for more room, till there is scarce a corner left where the Babe of Bethlehem can be laid.

As for the inns of modern times who would think of finding Christ there? Putting out of our catalog in those hotels and roadside houses which are needed for the accommodation of travelers, what greater curse have we than our taverns and pothouses? What wider gates of Hell? Who would ever resort to such places as we have flaring with gas lights at the corners of all our streets to find Christ there? As well might we expect to find Him in the bottomless pit! We should be just as likely to look for angels in Hell, as to look for Christ in a gin palace! He who is separate from sinners finds no fit society in the reeking temple of Bacchus. There is no room for Jesus in the inn.

I think I would rather rot or feed the crows, than earn my daily bread by the pence of fools, the hard earnings of the poor man, stolen from his

ragged children and his emaciated wife. What do many publicans fatten upon but the flesh and bones and blood and souls of men? He who grows rich on the fruits of vice is a beast preparing for the slaughter. Truly, there is no room for Christ among the drunkards of Ephraim. They who have anything to do with Christ should hear Him sayCome you out from among them and be you separate. Touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you and be a Father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters. There is no room for Christ now-a-days even in the places of public resort.

IV. This brings me to my fourth head, which is the most pertinent and the most necessary to dwell upon for a moment. HAVE YOU ROOM FOR CHRIST? HAVE YOU ROOM FOR CHRIST? As the palace and the forum and the inn have no room for Christ, and as the places of public resort have none, have you room for Christ?

Well, says one, I have room for Him but I am not worthy that He should come to me. Ah, I did not ask about worthiness. Have you room for Him? Oh, says one, I have an empty void the world can never fill! Ah, I see you have room for Him. Oh, but the room I have in my heart is so base! So was the manger. But it is so despicable! So was the manger a thing to be despised. Ah, but my heart is so foul! So, perhaps, the manger may have been. Oh, but I feel it is a place not at all fit for Christ! Nor was the manger a place fit for Him and yet there He was laid.

Oh, but I have been such a sinner. I feel as if my heart had been a den of beasts and devils! Well, the manger had been a place where beasts had fed. Have you room for Him? Never mind what the past has been. He can forget and forgive. It matters not what even the present state may be if you mourn it. If you have but room for Christ, He will

come and be your guest. Do not say, I pray you, I hope I shall have room   
for Him. The time is come that He shall be born. Mary cannot wait months and years.

Oh, Sinner, if you have room for Him let Him be born in your soul today. Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation. Today is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation. Room for Jesus! Room for Jesus, now! Oh, says one, I have room for Him but will He come? Will He come, indeed! If you but set the door of your heart open, and say, Jesus, Master, all unworthy and unclean I

look to You. Come, lodge within my heart, He will come to you and He   
will cleanse the manger of your heart. NoHe will transform it into a golden throne and there He will sit and reign forever and forever.

Oh, I have such a free Christ to preach this morning! I would I could preach Him better. I have such a precious, loving, Jesus to preach! He is willing to find a home in humble hearts. What? Are there no hearts here

this morning that will take Him in? Must my eye glance round these gal

leries and look at many of you who are still without Him, and are there none who will say, Come in, come in? Oh, it shall be a happy day for you if you shall be enabled to take Him in your arms and receive Him as the consolation of Israel!

You may then look forward even to death with joy, and say with SimeonLord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation. My Master wants room! Room for Him! Room for Him! I, His herald, cry aloud, Room for the Savior! Room! Here is my royal Masterhave you room for Him? Here is the

Son of God made fleshhave you room for Him? Here is He who can forgive all sinhave you room for Him? Here is He who can take you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clayhave you room for Him? Here is He who, when He comes in will never go out again but abide with you forever to make your heart a Heaven of joy and bliss for youhave you room for Him?

It is all I ask. Your emptiness, your nothingness, your want of feeling, your want of goodness, your want of Graceall these will be but room for Him. Have you room for Him? Oh, Spirit of God, lead many to say, Yes, my heart is ready. Ah, then He will come and dwell with you

*Joy to the world the Savior comes,   
The Savior promised long;   
Let every heart prepare a throne   
And every voice a song.*

V. I conclude with the remark, that if you have room for Christ, then from this day forth remember THE WORLD HAS NO ROOM FOR YOU. For the text says not only that there was no room for Him but look There was no room for themno room for Joseph, nor for Maryany more than for the Babe. Who are His father and mother and sister and brother but those that receive His word and keep it? So, as there was no room for the blessed Virgin, nor for the reputed father, remember from now on there is no room in this world for any true follower of Christ.

There is no room for you to take your ease. No, you are to be a soldier of the Cross and you will find no ease in all your life-warfare. There is no room for you to sit down contented with your own attainments, for you are a traveler and you are to forget the things that are behind and press forward to that which is before. No room for you to hide your treasure in, for here the moth and rust does corrupt. No room for you to put your con

fidence , for Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm. From this day there will be no room for you in the worlds good opinion they will count you to be an offscouring.

No room for you in the worlds polite societyyou must go without the camp, bearing His reproach. From this time forth, I say, if you have room for Christ, the world will hardly find room of sufferance for you. You must expect now to be laughed at. Now you must wear the fools cap in mens esteem. And your song must be at the very beginning of your pil

grimage *Jesus, I Your Cross have taken, (by Your Grace) All to leave and follow You.   
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,   
You from now my All shall be.*

There is no room for you in the worldlings love. If you expect that everybody will praise you and that your good actions will all be applauded, you will be quite mistaken. The world, I say, has no room for the man who has room for Christ. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Woe unto you when all men speak well of you. You are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. Thank God, you need not ask the worlds hospitality. If it will give you but a stage for action and lend you for an hour a grave to sleep in, it is all you need.

You will require no permanent dwelling place here, since you seek a city that is to come, which has foundations and whose builder and

maker is God. You are hurrying through this world as a stranger through a foreign land, and you rejoice to know that though you are an alien and a foreigner here, yet you are a fellow citizen with the saints and of the household of God. What do you say, young Soldier, will you enlist on such terms as these?

Will you give room for Christ when there is to be from now on no room for youwhen you are to be separated forever, maybe cut off from among the worlds kith and kincut off from carnal confidence forever? Are you willing, notwithstanding all this, to receive the Traveler? The Lord help you to do so and to Him shall be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1330 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE GREAT BIRTHDAY   
NO. 1330

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 24, 1876. BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**The angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. Luke 2:10.**

THERE is no reason upon earth, beyond that of ecclesiastical custom, why the 25th of December should be regarded as the birthday of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ anymore than any other day from the first of January to the last day of the year. And yet some persons regard Christmas with far deeper reverence than the Lords-Day. You will often hear it asserted that, The Bible and the Bible, alone, is the religion of Protestants, but it is not so! There are Protestants who have absorbed a great deal beside the Bible into their religion and among other things they have accepted the authority of what they call, the Church, and by that door all sorts of superstitions have entered. There is no authority whatever, in the Word of God, for the keeping of Christmas at all! And there is certainly no reason for keeping it just now except that the most superstitious section of Christendom has made a rule that December 25th shall be observed as the birthday of the Lord and the Church, established by State Law in this land, has agreed to follow in the same track.

You are under no bondage, whatever, to regard the regulation. We owe no allegiance to the ecclesiastical powers which have made a decree on this matter, for we belong to an old-fashioned Church which does not dare to make laws, but is content to obey them. At the same time, the day is no worse than another, and if you choose to observe it and observe it unto the Lord, I doubt not that He will accept your devotion. But, if you do not observe it, but unto the Lord observe it not for fear of encouraging superstition and will-worship, I doubt not but what you shall be as accepted in the non-observance as you could have been in the observance of it!

Still, as the thoughts of a great many Christian people will run, at this time, towards the birth of Christand as this cannot be wrongI judged it meet to use ourselves of the prevailing current and float down the stream of thought. Our minds will run that way because so many around us are following customs suggestive of it. Therefore let us get what good we can out of the occasion. There can be no reason why we should not, and it may be helpful that we should, now, consider the birth of our Lord Jesus. We will do that voluntarily which we would refuse to do as a matter of obligationwe will do that simply for convenience sake which we should not think of doing because enjoined by authority or demanded by superstition!

The shepherds were keeping their flocks by night. Probably a calm, peaceful night, wherein they felt the usual difficulty of keeping their weary eyelids open as sleep demanded its due of them. All of a sudden, to their amazement, a mighty blaze lit up the heavens and turned midnight into midday! The Glory of the Lord, by which, according to the idiom of the language, is meant the greatest conceivable glory as well as a Divine Glory, surrounded and alarmed them! And in the midst of it they saw a shining spirit, a form, the like of which they had never beheld before, but of which they had heard their fathers speak, and of which they had read in the Books of the Prophets so that they knew it to be an angel.

It was, indeed, no common messenger from Heaven, but the angel of the Lord, that choice presence angel, whose privilege it is to stand nearest the heavenly majesty, mid the bright ones doubly bright, and to be employed on weightiest errands from the eternal Throne of God. The angel of the Lord came upon them. Are you astonished that at first they were afraid? Would you not be alarmed if such a thing should happen to you? The stillness of the night, the suddenness of the apparition, the extraordinary splendor of the light, the supernatural appearance of the angelall would tend to astound them and to put them into a quiver of reverential alarmfor I doubt not there was a mixture both of reverence and of fear in that feeling which is described as being sorely afraid.

They would have fallen on their faces to the ground in fright had there not dropped out of that, glory of the Lord, a gentle voice, which said, Fear not. They were calmed by that sweet comfort and enabled to listen to the announcement which followed. Then that voice, in accents sweet as the notes of a silver bell, proceeded to say, Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. They were bid to shake off all thoughts of fear and to give themselves up to joy! Doubtless they did so and, among all mankind, there were none so happy at that dead of night as were these shepherds who had seen an amazing sight!

They would never forget that night and now were consulting whether they should not hasten away to gaze upon a sight which would be more delightful still, namely, the Babe of which the angel spoke! May great joy be upon us, also, while our thought shall be that the birth of Christ is the cause of supreme joy. When we have spoken upon this we shall have to enquire, to whom does that joy belong? And thirdly, we shall consider how they shall express that joy while they possess it. May the Holy Spirit now reveal the Lord Jesus to us and prepare us to rejoice in Him.

I. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST SHOULD BE THE SUBJECT OF SUPREME JOY. Rightly so. We have the angelic guarantee for rejoicing because Christ is born! It is a Truth of God so full of joy that it caused the angel who came to announce it, to be filled with gladness! He had little to do with the fact, for Christ took not up angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham. But I suppose that the very thought that the Creator should be linked with the creaturethat the great Invisible and Omnipotent should come into alliance with that which He, Himself, had madecaused the angel, as a creature, to feel that all creatureship was elevated and this made him glad.

Besides, there was a sweet benevolence of spirit in the angels bosom which made him happy because he had such gladsome tidings to bring to the fallen sons of men! Although they are not our brethren, yet do angels take a loving concern in all our affairs. They rejoice over us when we repent! They are ministering spirits when we are saved and they bear us aloft when we depart! And we are sure that they can never be unwilling servants to their Lord, or tardy helpers of His beloved ones. They are friends of the Bridegroom and rejoice in His joy! They are household servants of the family of love and they wait upon us with an eager diligence which betokens the tenderness of feeling which they have towards the Kings sons.

Therefore the angel delivered his message cheerfully, as became the place from which he came, the theme which brought him down and his own interest therein. He said, I bring you good tidings of great joy, and we are sure he spoke in accents of delight. Yes, so glad were angels at this Gospel that when the discourse was over, one angel, having evangelized and given out the Gospel for the day, there suddenly appeared a band of choristers and sang an anthem loud and sweet that there might be a full service at the first propounding of the glad tidings of great joy! A multitude of the heavenly host had heard that a chosen messenger had been sent to proclaim the new-born King and, filled with holy joy and adoration, they gathered up their strength to pursue him, for they could not let him go to earth alone on such an errand!

They overtook him just as he had reached the last word of his discourse and then they broke forth in that famous chorale, the only one sung of angels that was ever heard by human ears here below, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Thus, I say, they had a full servicethere was Gospel ministry in rich discourse concerning Christand there was hearty and devout praise from a multitude all filled with heavenly joy! It was so glad a message that they could not let it be simply spoken by a solitary voice, though that were an angels, but they must pour forth a glad chorus of praise, singing unto the Lord a new song!

Brothers and Sisters, if the birth of Jesus was so gladsome to our cousins, the angels, what should it be to us? If it made our neighbors, who had comparatively so small a share in it, sing, how should it make us leap for joy? Oh, if it brought Heaven down to earth, should not our songs go up to Heaven? If Heavens gate of pearl was set open at its widest and a stream of shining ones came running downward to the lower skies to anticipate the time when they shall all descend in solemn pomp at the glorious advent of the great King. If it emptied Heaven for a while to make earth so glad, ought not our thoughts and praises and all our loves to go pouring up to the eternal gate, leaving earth, awhile, that we may crowd Heaven with the songs of mortal men? Yes, verily, so let it be!

*Glory to the new born King!   
Let us all the anthem sing   
Peace on earth, and mercy mild;   
God and sinners reconciled.*

For, first, the birth of Christ was the Incarnation of Godit was God taking upon Himself human naturea mystery, a wondrous mystery, to be believed in rather than to be defined! Yet so it was that in the manger lay an Infant who was also Infinite! A feeble Child who was also the Creator of Heaven and earth! How this could be we do not know but that it was so we assuredly believe, and therein do we rejoice! If God thus takes upon Himself human nature, then manhood is not abandoned nor given up as hopeless! When manhood had broken the bonds of the Covenant and snatched from the one reserved tree the forbidden fruit, God might have said, I give you up, O Adam, and cast off your race. Even as I gave up Lucifer and all his host, so I abandon you to follow your own chosen course of rebellion!

But we have now no fear that the Lord has done this, for God has espoused manhood and taken it into union with Himself! Now manhood is not put aside by the Lord as an utterly accursed thing, to be an abomination unto Him forever, for Jesus, the Well-Beloved, is born of a virgin! God would not have taken manhood into union with Himself if He had not said, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it. I know the curse has fallen upon men because they have sinned, but evidently not on manhood in the abstract, for else had not Christ come to take upon Himself the form of man and to be born of woman! The Word made flesh means hope for manhood, notwithstanding the Fall!

The race is not to be outlawed and marked with the brand of death and Hell, or to be utterly abandoned to destruction, for, lo, the Lord has married into the race and the Son of God has become the Son of Man! This is enough to make all that is within us sing for joy! Then, too, if God has taken manhood into union with Himself, He loves man and means mans good. Behold what manner of love God has bestowed upon us that He should espouse our nature! For God had never so united Himself with any creature before. His tender mercy had ever been over all His works, but they were still so distinct from Himself that a great gulf was fixed between the Creator and the created, so far as existence and relationship are concerned.

The Lord had made many noble intelligences, principalities and powers of whom we know little. We do not even know what those four living creatures may be who are nearest the eternal Presencebut God had never taken up the nature of any of them, nor allied Himself with them by any actual union with His Person. But, lo, He has allied Himself with man, that creature a little lower than the angels, that creature who is made to suffer death by reason of his sin! God has come into union with man and, therefore, full sure He loves him unutterably well and has great thoughts of good towards him. If a kings son does marry a rebel, then for that rebel race there are prospects of reconciliation, pardon and restoration!

There must be in the great heart of the Divine One wondrous thoughts of pity and condescending love if He deigns to take human nature into union with Himself! Joy, joy forever! Let us sound the fond cymbals of delight for the Incarnation bodes good to our race! If God has taken manhood into union with Himself, then God will feel for man! He will have pity upon him! He will remember that he is dust. He will have compassion upon his infirmities and sicknesses. You know, Beloved, how graciously it is so, for that same Jesus who was born of a woman at Bethlehem is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, having been tempted in all points like we are! Such intimate practical sympathy would not have belonged to our great High Priest if He had not become Man!

Not even though He is Divine could He have been perfect in sympathy with us if He had not, also, become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. The Captain of our salvation could only be made perfect through sufferingit is necessary that since the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He, Himself, also should take part of the same. For this, again, we may ring the silver bells, since the Son of God now intimately sympathizes with man because He is made in all points like unto His brethren!

Further, it is clear that if God condescends to be so intimately allied with manhood, He intends to deliver man and to bless him. Incarnation prophesies salvation. Oh, believing Soul, your God cannot mean to curse you! Look at God Incarnate! What do you see there but salvation? God in human flesh must mean that God intends to set man above all the works of His hands and to give him dominion, according to His first intent, over all sheep and oxen and all that pass through the paths of the sea and the air! Yes, it must mean that there is to be a man beneath whose feet all things shall be placed, so that even Death, itself, shall be subject unto Him. When God stoops down to man it must mean that man is to be lifted up to God! What joy there is in this! Oh that our hearts were but half alive to the Incarnation! Oh that we did but know a thousandth part of the unutterable delight which is hidden in this thought, that the Son of God was born a Man at Bethlehem! Thus you see that there is overflowing cause for joy in the birth of Christ because it was the Incarnation of the Deity.

But further, the angel explained our cause for joy by saying that He, who was born, was unto us a Savior. Unto you is born this day a Savior. Brothers and Sisters, I know who will be most glad, today, to think that Christ was born a Savior. It will be those who are most conscious of their sinnership! If you would draw music out of that ten-stringed harpthe word, Saviorpass it over to a sinner. Savior is the harp, but sinner is the finger that must touch the strings and bring forth the melody. If you know yourself lost by nature and lost by practice. If you feel sin like a plague at your heart. If evil wearies and worries you. If you have known the burden and the shame of iniquity, then will it be bliss to you even to hear of that Savior whom the Lord has provided!

Even as a Babe, Jesus, the Savior, will be precious to you! But most of all because He has now finished all the work of your salvation! You will look to the commencement of that work and then survey it even to its close and bless and magnify the name of the Lord. Unto you, O you who

are the chief of sinners, even unto you, you consciously guilty ones, is born a Savior! He is a Savior by birthfor this purpose is He born! To save sinners is His birthright and office! It is from now on an institution of the Divine dominion and an office of the Divine Nature to save the lost! Henceforth God has laid help upon One that is mighty, and exalted One chosen out of the people, that He may seek and save that which was lost. Is there not joy in this? Where else is joy if not here?

Next, the angel tells us that this Savior is Christ the Lord and there is much gladness in that fact. Christ, signified anointed. Now when we know that the Lord Jesus Christ came to save, it is most pleasant to perceive, in addition, that the Father does not let Him enter upon His mission without the necessary qualifications. He is anointed of the Highest that He may carry out the offices which He has undertakenthe Spirit of the Lord rested upon Him without measure! Our Lord is anointed in a threefold sense, as Prophet, Priest and King. It has been well observed that this anointing, in its threefold power, never rested upon any other man.

There have been kingly prophets, David to wit. There was one kingly priest, even Melchisedec. And there have also been priestly Prophets such as Samuel. Thus it has come to pass that two of the offices have been united in one man, but the whole threeProphet, Priest and Kingnever met in one thrice-anointed being until Jesus came. We have the fullest anointing conceivable in Christ, who is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. And as the Messiah, the Sent One of God, Jesus Christ is completely prepared and qualified for all the work of our salvation. Let our hearts be glad! We have not a nominal Savior, but a Savior fully equipped! He is One who in all points is like ourselves, for He is Man, but in all points fit to help the feebleness which He has espoused, for He is the anointed Man.

See what an intimate mingling of the Divine and human is found in the angels song. They sing of Him as a Savior, and a Savior must of necessity be Divine in order to save from death and Hell. And yet the title is drawn from His dealings with humanity! Then they sing of Him as, Christ, and that must be human, for only man can be anointed, yet that unction comes from the Godhead! Sound forth the jubilee trumpets for this marvelously Anointed One and rejoice in Him who is your Priest, to cleanse you, your Prophet to instruct you and your King to deliver you! The angels sang of Him as Lord, and yet as born. So here, again, the godlike in dominion is joined with the human in birth. How well did the words and the sense agree!

The angel further went on to give these shepherds cause for joy by telling them that while their Savior was born to be the Lord, yet He was so born in lowliness that they would find Him a Babe, wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. Is there cause of joy there? I say, yes, indeed, there is, for it is the terror of the Godhead which keeps the sinner, oftentimes, away from reconciliation! But see how the Godhead has graciously concealed itself in a Babe, a little Babea Babe that needed to be wrapped in swaddling bands like any other new-born child! Who fears to approach Him? Who ever heard of trembling in the presence of a babe? Yet is the Godhead there!

My Soul, when you cannot, for very amazement, stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire. When the Divine Glory is like a consuming fire to your spirit and the sacred majesty of Heaven is altogether overpowering to you, then come to this Babe, and say, Yet God is here, and here can I meet Him in the Person of His dear Son, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Oh, what bliss there is in Incarnation if we remember that herein Gods Omnipotence comes down to mans feebleness and infinite Majesty stoops to mans infirmity!

Now mark, the shepherds were not to find this Babe wrapped in Tyrian purple nor swathed in choicest fabrics fetched from afar   
*No crown bedecks His forehead fair,   
No pearl, nor gem, nor silk is there.*

Nor would they discover Him in the marble halls of princes, nor guarded by praetorian legionaries, nor pampered by vassal sovereigns. They would find Him the Babe of a peasant woman, of princely lineage it is true, but of a family whose stock was dry and forgotten in Israel. The Child was reputed to be the son of a carpenter. If you looked on the humble father and mother and at the poor bed they had made up, where earlier oxen had come to feed, you would say, This is condescension, indeed.

O you poor, be glad, for Jesus is born in poverty and cradled in a manger! O you sons of toil, rejoice, for the Savior is born of a lowly virgin and a carpenter is His foster father. O you people, oftentimes despised and downtrodden, the Prince of the Democracy is bornone chosen out of the people is exalted to the throne! O you who call yourselves the aristocracy, behold the Prince of the kings of the earth, whose lineage is Divine and yet there is no room for Him in the inn! Behold, O men, the Son of God, who is bone of your bone, intimate with all your griefs! Who in His life was hungry as you are hungry, was weary as you are weary and wore humble garments like your own! Yes, He suffered worse poverty than you, for He was without a place where to lay His head! Let the heavens and the earth be glad since God has so fully, so truly, come down to man!

Nor is this all. The angel called for joy, and I ask for it, too, on this ground, that the birth of this child was to bring Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men. The birth of Christ has given such Glory to God as I know not that He could ever have had here by any other means! We must always speak in accents soft and low when we talk of Gods Glory. In itself it must always be infinite and not to be conceived by us. And yet may we not venture to say that all the works of Gods hands do not glorify Him so much as the gift of His dear Sonthat all creation and all Providence do not so well display the heart of Deity as when He gives His Only-Begotten and sends Him into the world that men may live through Him?

What wisdom is manifested in the plan of redemption of which the Incarnate God is the center! What love is there revealed! What power is that which brought the Divine One down from Glory to a manger? Only Om

nipotence could have worked so great a marvel! What faithfulness to ancient promises! What truthfulness in keeping covenant! What Grace and yet what justice! For it was in the Person of that newborn Child that the Law must be fulfilled and in His precious body must vengeance find recompense for injuries done to Divine righteousness! All the attributes of God were in that little Child most marvelously displayed and veiled. Conceive the whole sun to be focused to a single point and yet so softly revealed as to be endurable by the most tender eyeseven thus the glorious God is brought down for man to see Him born of a woman!

Think of it! The express image of God in mortal flesh! The heir of all things cradled in a manger! Marvelous is this! Glory to God in the highest! He has never revealed Himself before as He now manifests Himself in Jesus! It is through our Lord Jesus being born that there is already a measure of peace on earth and boundless peace yet to come. Already the teeth of war have been somewhat broken and a testimony is borne by the faithful against this great crime. The religion of Christ holds up its shield over the oppressed and declares tyranny and cruelty to be loathsome before God. Whatever abuse and scorn may be heaped upon Christs true minister, he will never be silent while there are downtrodden nationalities and races needing his advocacy.

Nor will Gods servants anywhere, if faithful to the Prince of Peace, ever cease to maintain peace among men to the utmost of their power. The day comes when this growing testimony shall prevail and nations shall learn war no more. The Prince of Peace shall snap the spear of war across His knee. He, the Lord of all, shall break the arrows of the bow, the sword and the shield and the battleand He shall do it in His own dwelling place, even in Zion, which is more glorious and excellent than all the mountains of prey! As surely as Christ was born at Bethlehem, He will yet make all men brothers and establish a universal monarchy of peace, of which there shall be no end!

So let us sing if we value the Glory of God, for the new-born Child reveals it! And let us sing if we value peace on earth, for He is come to bring it! Yes, and if we love the link which binds glorified Heaven with pacified earththe good will towards men which the Eternal herein manifestslet us give a third note to our hallelujah and bless and magnify Immanuel, God with us, who has accomplished all this by His birth among us. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

I think I have shown you that there was room enough for joy for the shepherds, but you and I, who live in later days, when we understand the whole business of salvation, ought to be even more glad than they were, though they glorified and praised God for all the things that they had heard and seen. Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let us at least do as much as these simple shepherds and exult with our whole souls!

II. Secondly, let us consider TO WHOM THIS JOY BELONGS. I was very heavy yesterday in spirit, for this dreary weather tends greatly to depress the mind

*No lark could pipe to skies so dull and gray.*

But a thought struck me and filled me with intense joy. I tell it to you, not because it will seem anything to you, but as having gladdened myself. It is a bit all for myself to be placed in a parenthesis! It is this, that the joy of the birth of Christ in part belongs to those who tell of it, for the angels who proclaimed it were exceedingly glad, as glad as glad could be! I thought of this and whispered to my heart, As I shall tell of Jesus born on earth for men, I will take license to be glad, also, glad if for nothing else that I have such a message to bring to them.

The tears stood in my eyes and stand there even now, to think that I should be privileged to say to my fellow men, God has condescended to assume your nature that He might save you. These are as glad and as grand words as he of the golden mouth could have spoken. As for Cicero and Demosthenes, those eloquent orators had no such theme to dwell upon! Oh, joy, joy, joy! There was born into this world a Man who is also God! My heart dances as David danced before the Ark of God! This joy was meant, not for the tellers of the news alone, but for all who heard it. The glad tidings shall be unto all people. Read, all the people, if you like, for so, perhaps, the letter of the original might demand.

Well, then, it meant that it was joy to all the nation of the Jewsbut assuredly our version is truer to the inner spirit of the textit is joy to all people upon the face of the earth that Christ is born! There is not a nation under Heaven but what has a right to be glad because God has come down among men! Sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem! Take up the strain, O you dwellers in the wilderness, and let the multitude of the isles be glad! You, who beneath the frigid zone, feel in your very marrow all the force of Gods north wind, let your hearts burn within you at this happy truth! And you whose faces are scorched by the heat of the torrid sun, let this be as a well of water unto you! Exult and magnify Jehovah that His Son, His Only-Begotten, is also Brother to mankind!

*O wake our hearts, in gladness sing!   
And hail each one the newborn King,   
Till living song from loving souls*

*Like sound of mighty waters rolls.*   
But, Brothers and Sisters, they do not all rejoice, not even all of those who know this glorious Truth of God. Nor does it stir the hearts of half of mankind. To whom, then, is it a joy? I answer, to all who believe it and especially to all who believe it as the shepherds didwith that faith which staggers not through unbelief. The shepherds never had a doubt! The light, the angels and the song were enough for them. They accepted the glad tidings without a single question. In this the shepherds were both happy and wise, yes, wiser than the would-be wise whose wisdom can only manifest itself in quibbling.

This present age despises the simplicity of a childlike faith, but how wonderfully God is rebuking its self-conceit. He is taking the wise in their own craftiness. I could not but notice in the late discovery of the famous Greek cities and the sepulchers of the heroes, the powerful rebuke which the spirit of skepticism has received! These wise doubters have been

taken on their own ground and put to confusion! Of course they told us that old Homer was, himself, a myth, and the poem called by his name was a mere collection of unfounded legends and mere tales. Some ancient songster did but weave his dreams into poetry and foist them upon us as the blind minstrels songthere was no fact in it, they said, nor, indeed, in any current historyeverything was mere legend.

Long ago these gentlemen told us that there was no King Arthur, no William Tell, no anybody! Even as they questioned all sacred records, so have they cast suspicion upon all else that common men believe. But lo, the ancient cities speak! The heroes are found in their tombs! The childs faith is vindicated! They have disinterred the king of men and this and other matters speak in tones of thunder to the unbelieving ear, and say, You fools! The simpletons believed and were wiser than your culture made you. Your endless doubts have led you into falsehood and not into truth. The shepherds believed and were glad as glad could be, but if Professor \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (never mind his name) had been there on that memorable night, he would certainly have debated with the angel and denied that a Savior was needed at all!

He would coolly have taken notes for a lecture upon the nature of light and have commenced a disquisition upon the cause of certain remarkable nocturnal phenomena which had been seen in the fields near Bethlehem. Above all, he would have assured the shepherds of the absolute nonexistence of anything superhuman! Have not the learned men of our age proved that impossibility, scores of times, with sufficient arguments to convince a wooden post? They have made it as plain as that three times two are 18 that there is no God, nor angel, nor spirit! They have proven beyond all doubt, as far as their own dogmatism is concerned, that everything is to be doubted which is most sure and that nothing is to be believed at all except the infallibility of pretenders to science!

But these men find no comfort. Neither are they so weak as to need any, so they say. Their teaching is not glad tidings but a wretched negation, a killing frost which nips all noble hopes in the bud and in the name of reason steals away from man his truest bliss! Be it ours to be as philosophical as the shepherds, for they did not believe too much, but simply believed what was well attestedand this they found to be true upon personal investigation! In faith lies joy! If our faith can realize, we shall be happy.

I want, this morning, to feel as if I saw the Glory of the Lord still shining in the heavens, for it was there, though I did not see it. I wish I could see that angel, and hear him speak, but, failing this, I know he did speak, though I did not hear him. I am certain that those shepherds told no lies, nor did the Holy Spirit deceive us when He bade His servant, Luke, write this record! Let us forget the long interval between and only remember that it was really so. Realize that which was, indeed, matter of fact, and you may almost hear the angelic choir up in yonder sky still singing, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

At any rate, our hearts rehearse the anthem and we feel the joy of it by simply believing, even as the shepherds did.   
Mark well that believing what they did, these simple-minded shepherds desired to approach nearer the marvelous Babe. What did they do but consult together and say, Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass? O Beloved, if you want to get the joy of Christ, come near to Him! Whatever you hear about Him from His own Book, believe it! But then say, I will go and find Him. When you hear the voice of the Lord from Sinai, draw not near unto the flaming mountainthe Law condemns you, the Justice of God overwhelms you. Bow at a humble distance and adore with solemn awe.   
But when you hear of God in Christ, hasten there! Hasten there with all confidence, for you are not come unto the mountain that might not be touched, and that burned with fireyou are come unto the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel! Come near, come nearer, nearer still! Come, is His own word to those who labor and are heavy laden, and that same word He will address to you at the last Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world. If you want joy in Christ, come and find it in His bosom, or at His feet! There John and Mary found it long ago.   
And then, my Brothers and Sisters, do what the shepherds did when they came near. They rejoiced to see the Babe of whom they had been told! You cannot see with the physical eye, but you must meditateand so see with the mental eyes this great, grand and glorious Truth of God that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us! This is the way to have joy today, joy such as fitly descends from Heaven with the descent of Heavens King! Believe! Draw near! And then fixedly gaze upon Him and so be blest!   
**Hark how all the vault of Heaven rings   
Glory to the King of kings!   
Peace on earth and mercy mild,   
God and sinners reconciled.   
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;   
Hail the incarnate Deity,   
Pleased as Man with men to appear,   
Jesus our Immanuel here.**   
III. My time has fled, else I desired to have shown, in the third place, HOW THAT JOY SHOULD BE MANIFESTED. I will only give a hint or two. The way in which many believers in Christmas keep the feast we know too well. This is a Christian country, is it not? I have been told so, so often, that I suppose it must be true. It is a Christian country! But the Christianity is of a remarkable kind! It is not only that in the olden times, Christmas broached the mightiest ale, but nowadays Christmas keepers must get drunk upon it! I slander not our countrymen when I say that drunkenness seems to be one of the principal items of their Christmastide delight!   
If Bacchus were born at this time, I do think England keeps the birthday of that detestable deity most appropriately, but tell me not that it is the birth of the holy Child Jesus that they thus celebrate! Is He not crucified afresh by such blasphemy? Surely to the wicked, Jesus says, What have you to do to keep My birthday and mention My name in connection with your gluttony and drunkenness? Shame that there should be any cause for such words! Tenfold shame that there should be so much!   
You may keep His birthday all the year round, for it were better to say He was born every day of the year than on any one, for truly in a spiritual sense He is born every day of every year in some mens hearts! And that, to us, is a far weightier point than the observation of holy days! Express your joy, first, as the angels did, by public ministry. Some of us are called to speak to the many. Let us, in the clearest and most earnest tones proclaim the Savior and His power to rescue man.   
Others of you cannot preach, but you can sing. Sing, then, your anthems and praise God with all your hearts! Do not be slack in the devout use of your tongues, which are the glory of your frames, but again and again and again lift up your joyful hymns unto the new-born King! Others of you can neither preach nor sing. Well, then, you must do what the shepherds did, and what did they do? You are told twice that they spread the news. As soon as they had seen the Babe, they made known abroad the saying that was told them, and as they went home they glorified God. This is one of the most practical ways of showing your joy. Holy conversation is as acceptable as sermons and anthems!   
There was also one who said little, but thought the moreMary pondered all these things in her heart. Quiet, happy spirit, weigh in your heart the grand Truth of God that Jesus was born at Bethlehem. Immanuel, God with usweigh it if you can! Look at it again and again! Examine the varied facets of this priceless brilliant diamond and bless, and adore and love and wonder, and yet adore again this matchless miracle of love! Lastly, go and do good to others. Like the wise men, bring your offerings and offer to the newborn King your hearts best gold of love, frankincense of praise and myrrh of penitence.   
Bring everything of your hearts best and something of your substance, also, for this is a day of good tidings and it were unseemly to appear before the Lord empty. Come and worship God manifest in the flesh and be filled with His light and sweetness by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONLuke 2:1-21.** HYMN FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK249, 260, 256. END OF VOLUME 22. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
Sermon #727 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

GOD INCARNATE, THE END OF FEAR

NO. 727

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 23, 1866, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And the angel said unto them, Fear not.   
Luke 2:10.**

No sooner did the angel of the Lord appear to the shepherds, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, than they were sorely afraid. It had come to this, that man was afraid of his God, and when God sent down His loving messengers with tidings of great joy, men were filled with as much fright as though the angel of Death had appeared with uplifted sword. The silence of night and its dreary gloom caused no fear in the shepherds hearts, but the joyful herald of the skies, robed in mildest glories of Divine Grace, made them afraid.

We must not condemn the shepherds on this account as though they were peculiarly timid or ignorant, for they were only acting as every other person in that age would have done under the same circumstances. Not because they were simple shepherds were they amazed with fear, but it is probable that if they had been well-instructed Prophets they would have displayed the same feeling. There are many instances recorded in Scripture in which the foremost men of their time trembled and felt a horror of great darkness when special manifestations of God were vouchsafed to them. In fact, a slavish fear of God was so common that a tradition had grown out of it, which was all but universally received as nothing less than the Truth of God.

It was generally believed that every supernatural manifestation was to be regarded as a token of speedy death. We shall surely die because we have seen God was not only Manoahs conclusion, but that of most men of his period. Few, indeed, were those happy minds who, like Manoahs wife, could reason in a more cheerful style, If the Lord had meant to destroy us He would not have showed us such things as these. It became the settled conviction of all men, whether wise or simple, whether good or bad, that a manifestation of God was not so much to be rejoiced in as to be dreaded. Even Jacob said, How dreadful is this place! It is none other but the House of God.

Doubtless the spirit which originated this tradition was much fostered by the legal dispensation which is better fitted for trembling servants than for rejoicing sons. It was of the bond woman and it gendered into bondage. The solemn night in which its greatest institution was ordained was a night of trembling. Death was there in the slaughter of the lamb. Blood was there sprinkled on a conspicuous part of the house. Fire was there to roast the lamball the emblems of judgment were there to strike the mind with awe. It was at the dread hour of midnight when the solemn family conclave was assembled. The door being shut, the guests, themselves, standing in an uneasy attitude, and awestricken, for their hearts could hear the wings of the Destroying Angel as he passed by the house.

Afterwards, when Israel came into the wilderness, and the Law was proclaimed, do we not read that the people stood afar off and that bounds were set about the mount? And if so much as a beast touched the mountain it was to be stoned or thrust through with a dart! It was a day of fear and trembling when God spoke to them out of the fire. Not with the melting notes of harp, psaltery, or dulcimer did Gods Law come to His peoples ears! No soft wings of angels brought the message, and no sunny smiles of Heaven sweetened it to the mind! No, with sound of trumpet and thunder, out of the midst of blazing lightningwith Sinai altogether on a smokethe Law was given.

The laws voice was, Come not near here! The spirit of Sinai is fear and trembling. The legal ceremonies were such as rather to inspire fear than to beget trust. The worshipper at the temple saw bloodshed from the first of the year to the end of the year. The morning was ushered in with the blood-shedding of the lamb, and the evening shades could not gather without blood again being spilt upon the altar! God was in the midst of the camp, but the pillar of cloud and fire was His unapproachable pavilion.

The emblem of His glory was concealed behind the curtain of blue and scarlet and fine twined linenbehind which only one foot might pass and that but once in the year. Men spoke of the God of Israel with bated breath and with voices hushed and solemn. They had not learned to say, Our Father which are in Heaven. They had not received the spirit of adoption, and were not able to say Abba, Father. They smarted under the spirit of bondage which made them sorely afraid when by any peculiar manifestation the Lord displayed His Presence among them. At the bottom of all this slavish dread lay sin.

We never find Adam afraid of God, nor of any manifestation of Deity while he was an obedient creature in Paradise. But no sooner had he touched the fatal fruit than he found that he was naked and hid himself! When he heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, Adam was afraid and hid himself from the Presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Sin makes miserable cowards of us all! See the man who once could hold delightful converse with his Maker now dreading to hear his Makers voice and skulking in the grove like a felon who knows his guilt, and is afraid to meet the officers of justice!

Beloved, in order to remove this dread nightmare of slavish fear from the breast of humanity, where its horrible influence represses all the noblest aspirations of the soul, our Lord Jesus Christ came in the flesh! This is one of the works of the devil which He was manifested to destroy. Angels came to proclaim the good news of the advent of the Incarnate God, and the very first note of their song was a foretaste of the sweet result of His coming to all those who shall receive Him. The angel said, Fear not, as though the times of fear were over, and the days of hope and joy had arrived! Fear not. These words were not meant for those trembling shepherds, only, but were intended for you and for me, yes, for all nations to whom the glad tidings shall come!

Fear not. Let God no longer be the object of your slavish dread! Stand not at a distance from Him any more. The Word is made flesh. God has descended to tabernacle among men, that there may be no hedge of fire, no yawning gulf between God and man. Into this subject I wish to go this morning as God may help me. I am sensible of the value of the theme, and am very conscious that I cannot do it justice. I would earnestly ask God the Holy Spirit to make you drink of the golden cup of the Incarnation of Christ such draughts as I have enjoyed in my quiet meditations. I can scarcely desire more delight for my dearest friends.

There is no antidote for fear more excellent than the subject of that midnight song, the first and best of Christmas chorales, which from its first word to its last note chimes out the sweet message, which begins with, Fear not.

*It is my sweetest comfort, Lord,   
And will forever be,   
To muse upon the gracious truth   
Of your humanity.   
Oh joy! There sits in our flesh,   
Upon a throne of light,   
One of a human mother born,   
In perfect Godhead bright!   
Though earths foundations should be moved, Down to their lowest deep.   
Though all the trembling universe   
Into destruction sweep.   
Forever God, forever man,   
My Jesus shall endure.   
And fixed on Him,   
My hope remains   
Eternally secure.*

Dear Friends, I shall first detain your attention with a few remarks upon the fear of which I have already spoken. Then, secondly, we shall invite your earnest attention to the remedy which the angels came to proclaim. And then, thirdly, as we may have time, we shall endeavor to make an application of this remedy to various cases.

I. Turning to THE FEAR of the text, it may be well to discriminate. There is a kind of fear towards God from which we must not wish to be free. There is that lawful, necessary, admirable, excellent fear which is always due from the creature to the Creator, from the subject to the king, yes, and from the child toward the parent. That holy, filial fear of God, which makes us dread sin and constrains us to be obedient to His command is to be cultivated. We had fathers of our flesh, and we gave them reverence, shall we not be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

This is the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. To have a holy awe of our most holy, just, righteous, and tender Parent is a privilege, not a bondage! Godly fear is not the fear which has torment. Perfect love does not cast out, but dwells in joyful harmony. The angels perfectly love God, and yet with holy fear they veil their faces with their wings as they approach Him. And when we shall in Glory behold the face of God, and shall be filled with all His fullness, we shall not cease humbly and reverently to adore the Infinite Majesty. Holy fear is a work of the Holy Spirit, and woe unto the man who does not possess it! Let him boast as he may, his feeding himself without fear is a mark of his hypocrisy!

The fear which is to be avoided, is slavish fearthe fear which perfect love casts out, as Sarah cast out the bondwoman and her son. That trembling which keeps us at a distance from God, which makes us think of Him as a Spirit with whom we can have no communionas a Being who has no care for us except to punish usand for whom, consequently, we have no care except to escape if possible from His terrible Presence. This fear sometimes arises in mens hearts from their thoughts dwelling exclusively upon the Divine greatness. Is it possible to peer long into the vast abyss of Infinity and not to fear? Can the mind yield itself up to the thought of the Eternal, Self-Existent, Infinite One without being filled, first with awe and then with dread?

What am I? An aphid creeping upon a rosebud is a more considerable creature in relation to the universe of beings than I can be in comparison with God! What am I? A grain of dust that does not turn the scale of the most delicate balance is a greater thing to man than a man is to Jehovah! At best we are less than nothing and vanity! But there is more to abase us than this. We have had the impertinence to be disobedient to the will of this great One! And now the goodness and greatness of His nature are as a current against which sinful humanity struggles in vain, for the irresistible torrent must run its course and overwhelm every opponent. What does the great God seem to us, out of Christ, but a stupendous rock threatening to crush us, or a fathomless sea, hastening to swallow us up?

The contemplation of the Divine greatness may of itself fill man with horror and cast him into unutterable misery! Dwell long upon such themes, and like Job, you will tremble before Jehovah, who shakes the earth out of her place, and makes the pillars tremble. Each one of the sterner attributes of God will cause the same fear. Think of His power by which He rolls the stars along, and lay your hand upon your mouth! Think of His wisdom by which He numbers the clouds, and settles the ordinances of Heaven. Meditate upon any one of these attributes, but especially upon His justice, and upon that devouring fire which burns unceasingly against sinand it is no wonder if the soul becomes full of fear!

Meanwhile let a sense of sin with its great whip of wire flagellate the conscience, and man will dread the bare idea of God. For this is the burden of the voice of Conscience to guilty manIf you were an obedient creature, this God were still terrible to you, for the heavens are not pure in His sight, and He charged His angels with folly. What are you that you should be just with God, or have any claims upon Him? You have offended, you have lifted the hand of your rebellion against the infinite majesty of Omnipotencewhat will become of you? What can be your portion but to be set up forever as a monument of His righteous wrath?

Now such a fear as that being very easily created in the thoughtful mind, and being, indeed, as it seems to me, the natural heritage of man as the result of sin is most doleful and injurious. For wherever there is a slavish dread of the Divine Being it alienates man most thoroughly from his God. We are by our evil nature enemies to God, and the imagination that God is cruel, harsh, and terrible adds fuel to the fire of our enmity. Those whom we slavishly dread we cannot love. You could not make your child show forth love to you if its little heart was full of fearif it dreaded to hear your footsteps and was alarmed at the sound of your voice it could not love you. You might obey some huge monster because you were afraid of him, but to love him would be impossible.

It is one of the masterpieces of Satan to deceive man by presenting to his mind a hateful picture of God. He knows that men cannot love that which terrifies them and therefore he paints the God of Grace as a hard, unforgiving being who will not receive the penitent and have pity upon the sorrowful. God is love! Surely if men had but Grace enough to see the beauty of that portrait of Godthat miniature sketched with a single line, God is love! they would willingly serve such a God. When the Holy Spirit enables the mind to perceive the Character of God, the heart cannot refuse to love Him.

Base, fallen, depraved as men are, when they are illuminated from on high so as to judge rightly of God, their hearts melt under the genial beams of Divine love and they love God because He has first loved them. But there is the master-piece of Satan, that he will not let the understanding perceive the excellence of Gods Character and then the heart cannot love that which the understanding does not perceive to be loveable. In addition to alienating the heart from God, this fear creates a prejudice against Gods Gospel of Grace. There are persons in this place this morning who believe that if they were religious they would be miserable. It is the settled conviction of half of London that to trust in Jesus and to be obedient to God, which is the essence of all true religion, would be wretchedness itself.

Oh, says the worldly man, I should have to give up my pleasure if I were to become a Christian. Now this is one of the most wicked slanders that was ever invented and yet it has current belief everywhere. It is the popular theology that to be an enemy to God is happiness, but to be the friend of God is misery. What an opinion men must have of God, when they believe that to love Him is to be wretched! Oh, could they comprehend, could they but know how good God isinstead of imagining that His service would be slavery, they would understand that to be His friend is to occupy the highest and happiest position which created beings can occupy!

This fear in some men puts them out of all hope of ever being saved. Thinking God to be an ungenerous Being, they keep at a distance from Him. If there are some sweet attractions, now and then in a sermon, some gentle melting of conscience, the good desire never matures into the practical resolve. They do not say, I will arise and go unto my Father, because they do not know Him as a Fatherthey only know Him as a consuming fire. A man does not say, I will arise and go unto a consuming fire.

No, but like Jonah, he would gladly pay his fare, regardless of the expense, and go to Tarshish to flee from the Presence of the Lord! This it is that makes calamity of being a man at all, to most menthat they cannot get away from God, since they imagine that if they could but escape from His Presence they would then wander into bliss. But being doomed to be where God is, they then conceive that for them wretchedness and misery alone remain. The soft warnings of mercy and the thundering of justice are, alike, powerless upon men so long as their hearts are seared and rendered callous by an unholy dread of God.

This wicked dread of God frequently drives men to extremities of sin. The man says, There is no hope for me. I have made one fatal mistake in being Gods enemy and I am irretrievably ruined. There is no hope that I shall ever be restored to happiness or peace. Then what will I do? I will cast the reins upon the neck of my passions. I will defy fate and take my chance. I will get such happiness as may be found in sin. If I cannot be reconciled to Heaven I will be a good servant of Hell. And therefore men have been known to hasten from one crime to another with a malicious inventiveness of rebellion against God.

They act as if they could never be satisfied nor contented till they had heaped up more and more rebellions against the majesty of God whom in their hearts they dread with a burning Satanic dread mingled with hate. If they could but comprehend that He is still willing to receive the rebellious, that His heart yearns towards sinners! If they could but once believe that He is love and wills not the death of a sinner but had rather that he should turn unto Him and live, surely the course of their lives must be changed! But the god of this world blinds them and maligns the Lord until they count it folly to submit to Him.

Dear Friends, this evil which works a thousand ills operates in ways of evil quite innumerable. It dishonors God. Oh, it is infamous! It is villainous to make out our God, who is Light and in whom is no darkness at all, to be an object of horrible fear. It is infernal! I may say no less. It is devilish to the highest degree to paint Him as a demon, who is Jehovah, the God of Love. Oh, the impertinence of the Prince of Darkness, and the madness of man to consent to him, that God should be depicted as being unwilling to forgive, unkind, untender, hard, cruelwhereas He is love supremely and above all things, LOVE!

He is just, but all the more truly loving because He is just. He is true, and therefore sure to punish sin, yet even punishing sin because it were not good to let sin go unpunished. This is base ingratitude on the part of a much-receiving creature that he should malign his Benefactor. The evil which is thus done to God recoils upon manfor this fear has torment. No more tormenting misery in the world than to think of God as being our implacable foe! You Christians who have lost, for a while, the spirit of adoptionyou who have wandered a distance from God and nothing can be more tormenting to you than the fear that the Lord has cast you away and will not again receive you.

You backsliders, nothing can hold you back from your heavenly Father like a dread of Him! If you can but really know that He is not to be dreaded with slavish fear, you will come to Him as your child does to you, and you will say, My Father, I have offendedpity me! My Father, I am vexed and grieved for my sinforgive me, receive me again to Your arms, and help me, by Your mighty Grace, that from now on I may walk in Your Commandments and be obedient to Your will. My dear Friends, you who know anything about spiritual lifedont you feel that when you have sweet thoughts of God breathed into you from above and have His special love to you shed abroad in your heartsdont you feel that it is then that you are most holy?

Have you not perceived that the only way in which you can grow in that which is morally and spiritually lovely, is by having your gracious God high in your esteem, and feeling His precious love firing your hearts? That they may be like little children is the very thing which God desires for His elect ones! It is this which His Spirit works in His chosen! It is to this that we must come if we are to be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Slavish fear is so opposed to the child-like spirit that it is as the poison of asps to it. Dread and fear bring out everything in us that is of the man rather than of the child, for it stirs us up to resist the object of our fear.

An assured confidence in the goodness of God casts out fear and brings forth everything that is child-like in us. Have you ever seen a child trust some big, rough man, and melt him down by its trustfulness? It trusted where there was no ground for trust, apparently, and made ground for itself. That same child, simply and implicitly trusting in a good and generous father is a noble picture. And if I, a poor, weak, feeble child, conscious that I am suchknowing that I am all folly and weaknesscan just believe in my good, great God, through Jesus Christ, and come and trust myself with Him and leave Him to do as He likes with me, believing that He will not be unkind, and cannot be unwiseif I can wholly repose in His love and be obedient to His willwhy then I shall have reached the highest point that the creature can reach! The Holy Spirit will then have worked His finished work in me and I shall be fit for Heaven.

Beloved, it is because fear opposes this, and prevents this, that I would say with the angel, Fear not.   
II. I fear I weary you while I speak upon this somewhat dolorous theme, and therefore with as much brevity as the abundance of the matter may permit, let us notice in the second place, THE CURE FOR THIS FEAR, which the angel came to proclaim. It lies in thisUnto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. *Till God in human flesh I see,   
My thoughts no comfort find.   
The holy, just and sacred Three,   
Are terrors to my mind.   
But if Immanuels face appears,   
My hope, my joy begins!   
His name forbids my slavish fear,   
His Grace removes my sins.*   
That is the remedyGod with usGod made flesh. Let us try and show this from the angels song. According to the text they were not to fear, first of all, because the angel had come to bring them good news. How does it run? It says, I bring you good tidings of great joy. But what was this Gospel? Further on we are told that the Gospel was the fact that Christ was born! So, then, it is good news to men that Christ is born, that God has come down and taken manhood into union with Himself. Verily this is glad tidings! He who made the heavens slumbers in a manger! What then? Why, then God is not of necessity an enemy to man because here is God actually taking manhood into alliance with Deity! There cannot be permanent, inveterate, rooted enmity between the two natures, or otherwise the Divine Nature could not have taken the human into hypostatical union with itself. Is there not comfort in that? You are a poor, erring, feeble man, and that which makes you afraid of the Lord is this fear that there is an enmity between God and manbut there need not be such enmityfor your Maker has actually taken manhood into union with Himself!   
Do you not see another thought? The Eternal seems to be so far away from us. He is infinite and we are such little creatures. There appears to be a great gulf fixed between man and God, even on the ground of creatureship. But observe, He who is God has also become Man. We never heard that God took the nature of angels into union with Himselfwe may therefore say that between Godhead and angelhood there must be an infinite distance stillbut here the Lord has actually taken manhood into union with Himself! There is, therefore, no longer a great gulf fixed. On the contrary, here is a marvelous union! Godhead has entered into marriage bonds with manhood!   
O my Soul, you do not stand, now, like a poor lone orphan wailing across the deep sea after your Father who has gone far away and cannot hear you! You do not now sob and sigh like an infant left naked and helpless, its Maker having gone too far away to regard its needs or listen to its cries! No, your Maker has become like

yourself! Is that too strong a word to use? He without whom was not anything made that was made is that same Word who lived and walked among us and was made fleshmade flesh in such a way that He was tempted in all points like as we areyet without sin. O Manhood, was there ever such news as this for you! Poor Manhood, you weak worm of the dustfar lower than the angelslift up your head and be not afraid!   
Poor Manhood, born in weakness, living in toil, covered with sweat, and dying at last to be eaten by the wormsbe not abashed even in the presence of seraphsfor next to God is man, and not even an archangel can come in between! No, not next to God, there is scarcely that to be said, for Jesus who is God is Man also! Jesus Christ, eternally God, was born and lived and died as we also do! That is the first word of comfort to expel our fear.   
The second point that takes away fear is that this Man who was also God was actually born. Observe the angels word, Unto you is born. Our Lord Jesus Christ is in some senses more man than Adam. Adam was not bornAdam never had to struggle through the risks and weaknesses of infancy. He knew not the littlenesses of childhoodhe was full grown at once. Father Adam could not sympathize with me as a babe and a child. But how man-like is Jesus! He is cradled with us in the manger. He does not begin with us in mid-life, as Adam, but He accompanies us in the pains and feebleness and infirmities of infancy! And He continues with us even to the grave.   
Beloved, this is such sweet comfort! He that is God this day was once an Infant! So that if my cares are little and even trivial and comparatively infantile, I may go to Him, for He was once a Child. Though the great ones of the earth may sneer at the child of poverty, and say, You are too mean, and your trouble is too slight for pity, I remember with humble joy that the King of Heaven did hang upon a womans breast, and was wrapped in swaddling bandsand therefore I tell Him all my griefs. How wonderful that He should have been an Infant, and yet should be God over all, blessed forever! I am no longer afraid of God! This blessed link between me and God, the holy Child Jesus, has taken all fear away!   
Observe, the angel told them somewhat of His office, as well as of His birth. Unto you is born this day a Savior. The very object for which He was born and came into this world was that He might deliver us from sin. What, then, was it that made us afraid? Were we not afraid of God because we felt that we were lost through sin? Well then, here is joy upon joy! Here is not only the Lord come among us as a Man, but made Man in order to save man from that which separated him from God!   
I feel as if I could burst out into a weeping for some here who have been spending their living riotously and gone far away from God their Father by their evil ways. I know they are afraid to come back. They think that the Lord will not receive them, that there is no mercy for such sinners as they have been. Oh, but think of itJesus Christ has come to seek and to save that which was lost! He was born to save! If He does not save He was born in vain, for the object of His birth was salvation! If He shall not be a Savior, then the mission of God to earth has missed its end, for its design was that lost sinners might be saved.   
Lost One, oh, lost One!if there were news that an angel had come to save you there might be some cheer in it. But there are better tidings still! GOD has come! The Infinite, the Almighty, has stooped from the highest Heaven that He may pick you up, a poor undone and worthless worm! Is there not comfort here? Does not the Incarnate Savior take away the horrible dread which hangs over men like a black pall? Note that the angel did not forget to describe the person of this SaviorA Savior which is Christ. There is His Manhood! As Man He was anointed! The Lord. There is His Godhead.   
Yes, this is the solid Truth of God upon which we plant our feet. Jesus of Nazareth is God! He who was conceived in the womb of the virgin and born in Bethlehems manger is now, and always was God over all, blessed forever! There is no Gospel if He is not God. It is no news to me to tell me that a great Prophet is born. There have been great Prophets before. But the world has never been redeemed from evil by mere testimony to the truth, and never will be. Tell me that God is born, that God, Himself, has espoused our nature, and taken it into union with Himself! Then the bells of my heart ring merry peals, for now may I come to God since God has come to me!   
You will observe, dear Friends, that the substance of what the angel said lay in this. Unto you. You will never get true comfort from the incarnate Savior till you perceive your personal interest in him. Christ as Man was a representative man. There never were but two thoroughly representative menthe first is AdamAdam obedient and the whole race stands. Adam disobedient and the whole race falls. In Adam all die. Now, the Man Jesus is the second great representative man. He does not represent the whole human raceHe represents as many as His Father gave HimHe represents a chosen company.   
Now, whatever Christ did, if you belong to those who are in Him He did for you. So that Christ circumcised or Christ crucified, Christ dead or Christ living, Christ buried or Christ risen, you are a partaker of all that He did and all that He is, for you are reckoned as one with Him. See then, the joy and comfort of the Incarnation of Christ! Does Jesus, as Man, take manhood up to Heaven? He has taken me up there! Father Adam fell, and I fell, for I was in him. The Lord Jesus Christ rises, and I rise if I am in Him. See, Beloved, when Jesus Christ was nailed to the Cross all His elect were nailed there, and they suffered and died in Him.   
When He was put into the grave the whole of His people lay slumbering there in Him, for they were in the loins of Jesus as Levi was in the loins of Abraham. And when He rose they rose and received the foretaste of their own future resurrection! Because He lives they shall live also! And now that He has gone up on high to claim the throne, He has claimed the throne for every soul that is in Him. Oh, this is joy, indeed! Then how can I be afraid of God, for this day, by faith, I, a poor undeserving sinner, having put my trust in Jesus, am bold to say that I sit upon the throne of God? Think not that we have said too much, for in the Person of Christ every Believer is raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Because as Jesus is there representatively, we are each one of us there in Him.   
I wish that I had power to bring out this precious doctrine of the Incarnation as I desire, but the more one muses upon it, the more happy one becomes. Let us view it as an all-important Truth of God that Jesus, the Son of God, has really come in the flesh. It is so important a Truth that we have three witnesses appointed to keep it before us upon earth. We have been insisting many times in this place upon the spirituality of Christian worship. We have shown that the outward in religion, by itself, avails nothing. It is the inward spirit that is the great thing.   
I must confess that I have sometimes said in myself, I hope not rebelliously, What is this Baptism for, and what is this Communion of the Lords Supper for? These two outward ordinances, whatever may be their excellent uses, have been the two things around which more errors have clustered than around anything else! And I have heard it said, by friends inclined to follow more fully the teachings of the Quakers, Why not put aside the outward and visible altogether? Let it be the Spirit Baptism, and not the water. Let there be no bread and wine, but let there be fellowship with Christ without the outward sign.   
I must confess, though I dare not go with it because I hope to be held fast by the plain testimony of Scripture, yet my heart has somewhat gone with the temptation and I have half said, Men always will pervert these two ordinances. Would it not be as well to have done with them? While I have been exercised upon the point, conscious that the ordinances must be right, and must be held, I have rested upon that text, There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood. And what do they bear witness to? They bear witness to the mission of Jesus as the Christ, in other words, to the real Incarnation of God.   
They bear witness to the materialism of Christ. Have you ever noticed that when people have given up the two outward ordinances, they have usually betrayed a tendency to give up the literal fact that God was made flesh? The literal fact that Christ was really a Man has generally been doubted or thrown into the background when the two outward ordinances have been given up. I believe that these two symbolical ordinances, which are a link between the spiritual and the material, are set up on purpose to show that Christ Jesus, though most gloriously a Spirit, was also a Man clothed in a body of real flesh and blood like our own, so that He could be touched and handled even as He said, Handle Me and see. A spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have.   
When I think of the Holy Spirit who bears witness that Christ was really a Man, I thank Him for that witness! Then I turn to the water, and when I read that Christ was publicly baptized in the Jordan, I perceive that He could not have been a phantom. He could not have been a mere spectral appearance, for He was immersed in water. He must have been a solid substantial Man! The preservation of the ordinance of Baptism is a witness to the reality of the Incarnate God. Then comes the blood. He could not have shed blood on Calvary if He had been a specter. There could have been no blood streaming down from His side when the spear pierced Him if He had been only a ghostly apparition. He must have been solid flesh and blood like ourselvesand as often as we come to His table, and we take the cup and hear it saidThis cup is the New Covenant in My bloodthere is a third witness on earth to the fact that Jesus did appear in very flesh and blood among men!

So the Spirit, the water, and the blood are the three standing testimonies in the church of God that Christ was God, and that He was also really, solidly, and substantially Man. I shall delight in the ordinances all the more because of this. Those two ordinances serve to make us remember that Christ was really flesh and blood, and that religion has something to do with this flesh and blood of ours. This very body is to rise again from the tomb! Jesus came to deliver this poor flesh from corruption! And so, while we must ever keep the spiritual uppermost, we are prevented from casting away the material body as though that were of the devil. Christ purified as well the realm of matter as the realm of spirit! And in both He reigns triumphant! There is much comfort here.   
III. Lastly, we can only occupy a few seconds in APPLYING THE CURE TO VARIOUS CASES. Child of God, you say, I dare not come to God today, I feel so weak. Fear not, for He that is born in Bethlehem said, A bruised reed I will not break, and the smoking flax I will not quench. I shall never get to Heaven, says another, I shall never see Gods face with acceptance. I am so tempted. Fear not, for you have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of your infirmities, for He was tempted in all points like as you are. But I am so lonely in the world, says another, no man cares for me. There is one Man, at any rate, who does so carea true Man like yourself. He is your Brother, still, and does not forget the lonely spirit.   
But I hear a sinner say, I am afraid to go to God this morning and confess that I am a sinner. Well, do not go to God but go to Christ. Surely you would not be afraid of Him. Think of God in Christ, not out of Christ. If you could but know Jesus you would go to Him at once! You would not be afraid to tell Him your sins, for you would know that He would say, Go, and sin no more.   
I cannot pray, says one, I am afraid to pray. What? Afraid to pray when it is a Man who listens to you! You might dread the face of God, but when you see God in human flesh, why be alarmed? Go, poor Sinner, go to Jesus. I feel, says one, unfit to come. You may be unfit to come to God, but you cannot be unfit to come to Jesus! There is a fitness necessary to stand in the holy hill of the Lord, but there is no fitness needed in coming to the Lord Jesus! Come as you areguilty, and lost, and ruined! Come just as you are and He will receive you! Oh, says another, I cannot trust. I can understand your not being able to trust the great invisible God, but cannot you trust that dying, bleeding Son of Man who is also the Son of God?   
But I cannot hope, says another, that He would even look on me. And yet He used to look on such as you are. He received publicans and sinners and ate with them! And even harlots were not driven from His Presence. Oh, since God has thus taken man into union with Himself be not afraid! If I speak to one who by reason of sin has wandered so far away from God that he is even afraid to think of Gods name, yet inasmuch as Jesus Christ is called the sinners Friend, I pray you think of Him, poor Soul, as your Friend!   
And, oh, may the Spirit of God open your blind eyes to see that there is no cause for your keeping away from God except your own mistaken thoughts of Him! May you believe that He is able and willing to save to the uttermost! May you understand His good and gracious Character, His readiness to pass by transgression, iniquity, and sin! And may the sweet influences of Divine Grace quicken you to come to Him this very morning! God grant that Jesus Christ, the hope of Glory, may be formed in you! And then you may well sing, Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, and goodwill toward men. Amen.

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END VOLUME 12 Sermon #1026 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

JOY BORN AT BETHLEHEM   
NO. 1026

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 24, 1871, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a   
Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Luke 2:10, 11, 12.**

WE have no superstitious regard for times and seasons. Certainly we do not believe in the present ecclesiastical arrangement called Christmasfirst, because we do not believe in the mass at all, but abhor it, whether it is said or sung in Latin or in English. And, secondly, because we find no Scriptural warrant whatever for observing any day as the birthday of the Savior. And, consequently, because not of Divine authority, its observance is a superstition. Superstition has fixed most positively the day of our Saviors birth although there is no possibility of discovering when it occurred. Fabricius gives a catalog of 136 different learned opinions upon the matter. And various divines invent weighty arguments for advocating a date in every month in the year.

It was not till the middle of the third century that any part of the Church celebrated the nativity of our Lord. And it was not till very long after the Western Church had set the example, that the Eastern adopted it. Because the day is not known, superstition has fixed it. While the day of the death of our Savior might be determined with much certainty, superstition shifts the date of its observance every year. What is the method in the madness of the superstitious? Probably the fact is that the holy days were arranged to fit in with heathen festivals. We venture to assert that if there is any day in the year of which we may be pretty sure that it was not the day on which the Savior was born, it is the twenty-fifth of December.

Nevertheless, since the current of mens thoughts is led this way just now, and I see no evil in the current itself, I shall launch the boat of our discourse upon that stream and make use of the fact, which I shall neither justify nor condemn, by endeavoring to lead your thoughts in the same direction. Since it is lawful, and even laudable, to meditate upon the Incarnation of the Lord upon any day in the year, it cannot be in the power of other mens superstitions to render such a meditation improper for today.

Regarding not the day, let us, nevertheless, give God thanks for the gift of His dear Son. In our text we have before us the sermon of the first Evangelist under the Gospel dispensation. The preacher was an angel, and it was meet it should be so, for the grandest and last of all evangels will be proclaimed by an angel when he shall sound the trumpet of the Resurrection and the children of the regeneration shall rise into the fullness of their joy. The keynote of this angelic Gospel is joyI bring you

good tidings of great joy. Nature fears in the Presence of Godthe shepherds were sore afraid. The Law itself served to deepen this natural feeling of dismayseeing men were sinful, and the Law came into the world to reveal sinits tendency was to make men fear and tremble under any and every Divine Revelation.

The Jews unanimously believed that if any man beheld supernatural appearances, he would be sure to die, so that what Nature dictated, the Law and the general beliefs of those under it also abetted. But the first word of the Gospel ended all this, for the angelic Evangelist said, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings. Henceforth it is to be no dreadful thing for man to approach his Maker. Redeemed man is not to fear when God unveils the splendor of His majesty, since He appears no more a Judge upon His Throne of terror, but a Father, unbending in sacred familiarity before His own beloved children.

The joy which this first Gospel preacher spoke of was no mean one, for he said, I bring you good tidingsthat alone was joyand not good tidings of joy only, but good tidings of great joy. Every word is emphatic, as if to show that the Gospel is, above all things, intended to promote, and will most abundantly create the greatest possible joy in the human heart wherever it is received. Man is like a harp unstrung, and the music of his souls living strings is discordanthis whole nature wails with sorrow. But the Son of David, that mighty harper, has come to restore the harmony of humanity, and where His gracious fingers move among the strings, the touch of the fingers of an Incarnate God brings forth music sweet as that of the spheres, and melody rich as a seraphs canticle.

Would God that all men felt that Divine hand! In trying to open up this angelic discourse this morning, we shall note three thingsthe joy which is spoken of. Next, the persons to whom this joy comes. And then, thirdly, the sign, which is to us a sign as well as to these shepherdsa sign of the birth and source of joy.

I. First, then, THE JOY, which is mentioned in our textfrom where comes it, and what is it? We have already said it is a great joygood tidings of great joy. Earths joy is small, her mirth is trivial, but Heaven has sent us joy immeasurable, fit for immortal minds. Inasmuch as no note of time is appended, and no intimation is given that the message will ever be reversed, we may say that it is a lasting joya joy which will ring all down the agesthe echoes of which shall be heard until the trumpet brings the Resurrection.

Yes, and onward forever and forever. For when God sent forth the angel in his brightness to say, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, He did as much as say, From this time forth it shall be joy to the sons of men. There shall be peace to the human race, and goodwill towards men forever and forever, as long as there is glory to God in the highest. O blessed thought! The Star of Bethlehem shall never set. Jesus, the fairest among ten thousand, the most lovely among the beautiful, is a joy forever!

Since this joy is expressly associated with the Glory of God, by the Words, Glory to God in the highest, we may be quite clear that it is a

pure and holy joy. No other would an angel have proclaimed, and, indeed, no other joy is joy. The wine pressed from the grapes of Sodom may sparkle and foambut it is bitterness in the endand the dregs thereof are death. Only that which comes from the clusters of Eshcol is the true wine of the kingdom, making glad the heart of God and man. Holy joy is the joy of Heaven, and that, you can be sure, is the very cream of joy. The joy of sin is a fire-fountain, having its source in the burning soil of Hell maddening and consuming those who drink its firewater. Of such delights we desire not to drink.

It were to be worse than damned to be happy in sin, since it is the beginning of Divine Grace to be wretched in sin, and the consummation of Grace to be wholly escaped from sinand to shudder even at the thought of it. It is Hell to live in sin and miseryit is a lower deep still when men could fashion a joy in sin. God save us from unholy peace and from unholy joy! The joy announced by the angel of the nativity is as pure as it is lasting, as holy as it is great. Let us, then, always believe concerning the Christian religion that it has its joy within itself, and holds its feasts within its own pure precinctsa feast whose viands all grow on holy ground.

There are those who, tomorrow, will pretend to exhibit joy in the remembrance of our Saviors birth, but they will not seek their pleasure in the Saviorthey will need many additions to the feast before they can be satisfied. Joy in Immanuel would be a poor sort of mirth to them. In this country, too often, if one were unaware of the name, one might believe the Christmas festival to be a feast of Bacchus, or of Cerescertainly not a commemoration of the Divine birth. Yet is there cause enough for holy joy in the Lord Himself, and reasons for ecstasy in His birth among men.

It is to be feared that most men imagine that in Christ there is only seriousness and solemnity, and consequently weariness, gloom, and discontent. They therefore look out of and beyond what Christ allows, to snatch from the tables of Satan the delicacies with which to adorn the banquet held in honor of a Savior. Let it not be so among you. The joy which the Gospel brings is not borrowed, but blooms in its own garden. We may truly say in the language of one of our sweetest hymns

*I need not go abroad for joy,   
I have a feast at home,   
My sighs are turned into songs,   
My heart has ceased to roam.   
Down from above the Blessed Dove   
Has come into my breast,   
To witness His eternal love,   
And give my spirit rest.*   
Let our joy be living water from those sacred wells which the Lord Himself has dug. May His joy abide in us, that our joy may be full. Of Christs joy we cannot have too much. No fear of running to excess when His love is the wine we drink. Oh to be plunged in this pure stream of spiritual delights! But why is it that the coming of Christ into the world is the occasion of joy? The answer is as followsFirst, because it is evermore a joyous fact that God should be in alliance with man, especially when the alliance is so near that God should in very deed take our manhood into union with His Godheadso that God and man should constitute one Divine, mysterious Person.   
Sin had separated between God and man. But the Incarnation bridges the separationit is a prelude to the atoning Sacrificebut it is a prelude full of the richest hope. From now on, when God looks upon man He will remember that His own Son is a Man. From this day forth, when He beholds the sinner, if His wrath should burn, He will remember that His own Son, as Man, stood in the sinners place, and bore the sinners doom. As in the case of war, the feud is ended when the opposing parties intermarryso there is no more war between God and manbecause God has taken man into intimate union with Himself.   
Here, then, there was cause for joy. But there was more than that, for the shepherds were aware that there had been promises made of old which had been the hope and comfort of Believers in all agesand these were now to be fulfilled. There was that ancient promise made on the threshold of Eden to the first sinners of our race, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpents head. Another promise made to the father of the faithful, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed, and promises uttered by the mouths of Prophets and of saints since the world began.   
Now, the announcement of the angel of the Lord to the shepherds was a declaration that the Covenant was fulfilledthat now in the fullness of time God would redeem His Word, and the Messiah, who was to be Israels glory and the worlds hope was now really come. Be glad you heavens, and be joyful O earth, for the Lord has done it, and in mercy has He visited His people! The Lord has not suffered His Word to fail, but has fulfilled unto His people His promises. The time to favor Zion, yes the set time, is come. Now that the scepter is departed from Judah, behold the Shiloh comes, the Messenger of the Covenant suddenly appears in His temple! But the angels song had in it yet fuller reason for joy. For our Lord, who was born in Bethlehem, came as a Savior. Unto you is born this day a Savior. God had come to earth before, but not as a Savior. Remember that terrible coming when there went three angels into Sodom at nightfall, for the Lord said, I will go now and see whether it is altogether according to the cry thereof. He had come as a spy to witness human sin, and as an Avenger to lift His hand to Heaven, and bid the red fire descend and burn up the accursed cities of the plain. Horror to the world when God thus descends!   
If Sinai smokes when the Law is proclaimed, the earth itself shall melt when the breaches of the Law are punished. But now not as an angel of vengeance, but as a Man in mercy, God has come. Not to spy out our sin, but to remove it. Not to punish guilt, but to forgive it. The Lord might have come with thunderbolts in both His hands. He might have come like Elijah to call fire from Heaven. But no, His hands are full of gifts of love, and His Presence is the guarantee of Grace. The Babe born in the manger might have been another Prophet of tears, or another son of thunder, but He was not soHe came in gentleness, His Glory and His thunder alike laid aside

*Twas mercy filled the Throne, And wrath stood silent by, When Christ on the kind errand came   
To sinners doomed to die.*

Rejoice, you who feel that you are lost. Your Savior comes to seek and save you! Be of good cheer you who are in prison, for He comes to set you free. You who are famished and ready to die, rejoice that He has consecrated for you a Bethlehem, a house of bread, and He has come to be the Bread of Life to your souls. Rejoice, O sinners everywhere, for the Restorer of the castaways, the Savior of the fallen is born! Join in the joy, you saints, for He is the Preserver of the saved ones, delivering them from innumerable perils, and He is the sure Perfecter of such as He preserves. Jesus is no partial Savior, beginning a work and not concluding itno restoring and upholding, He also prefects and presents the saved ones without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing before His Fathers Throne. Rejoice aloud all you people, let your hills and valleys ring with joy, for a Savior who is mighty to save is born among you!

Nor was this all the holy mirth, for the next word has also in it a fullness of joya Savior, which is Christ, or the Anointed. Our Lord was not an amateur Savior who came down from Heaven upon an unauthorized mission. He was chosen, ordained, and anointed of God. He could truly say, the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me. Here is great comfort for all such as need a Savior. It is to them no mean consolation that God has Himself authorized Christ to save. There can be no fear of a jar between the Mediator and the Judge, no peril of a non-acceptance of our Saviors work. God has commissioned Christ to do what He has done, and in saving sinners He is only executing His Fathers own will.

Christ is here called, the Anointed. All His people are anointed, and there were priests after the order of Aaron who were anointed, but He is the Anointed, anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. So plenteously anointed that, like the unction upon Aarons head, the sacred anointing of the Head of the Church distils in copious streams, till we who are like the skirts of His garments are made sweet with the rich perfume. He is the Anointed in a threefold senseas Prophet to preach the Gospel with power. As Priest to offer sacrifice. As King to rule and reign. In each of these He is preeminent. He is such a Teacher, Priest, and Ruler as was never seen before. In Him was a rare conjunction of glorious offices, for never did prophet, priest, and king meet in one person before among the sons of men, nor shall it ever be so again.

Triple is the anointing of Him who is a Priest after the order of Melchisidec, a Prophet like unto Moses, and a King of whose dominion there is no end. In the name of Christ the Holy Spirit is glorified by being seen as anointing the Incarnate God. Truly, dear Brethren, if we did but understand all this and receive it into our hearts, our souls would leap for joy on this Sunday to think that there is born unto us a Savior who is anointed of the Lord. One more note, and this the loudest, let us sound it well and hear it wellwhich is Christ the Lord. Now the word Lord, or Kurios, here used, is tantamount to Jehovah. We cannot doubt that, because it is the same word used twice in the ninth verse, and in the ninth verse none can question that it means Jehovah.

Hear it, And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. And if this is not enough, read the 23rd verse, As it is written in the Law of the Lord, every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord. Now the word, Lord, here assuredly refers to Jehovah, the one God, and so it must there. Our Savior is Christ, God, Jehovah. No testimony to His Divinity could be more plain. It is indisputable. And what joy there is in thisfor suppose an angel had been our Saviorhe would not have been able to bear the load of my sin or yours.

Or if anything less than God had been set up as the ground of our salvation it might have been found too frail a foundation. But if He who undertakes to save is none other than the Infinite and the Almighty, then the load of our guilt can be carried upon such shoulders. The stupendous labor of our salvation can be achieved by such a Worker, and that with easefor all things are possible with Godand He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. You sons of men perceive here the subject of your joy! The God who made you, and against whom you have offended, has come down from Heaven and taken upon Himself your nature that He might save you!

He has come in the fullness of His Glory and the infinity of His mercy that He might redeem you. Do you not welcome this news? What? Will not your hearts be thankful for this? Does this matchless love awaken no gratitude? Were it not for this Divine Savior your life here would have been wretchedness, and your future existence would have been endless woe. Oh, I pray you adore the Incarnate God, and trust in Him! Then will you bless the Lord for delivering you from the wrath to come, and as you lay hold of Jesus and find salvation in His name you will tune your songs to His praise, and exult with sacred joy. So much concerning this joy.

II. Follow me while I briefly speak of THE PEOPLE to whom this joy comes. Observe how the angel begins, Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, for unto you is born this day. So, then, the joy began with the first who heard it, the shepherds. To you, says he, for unto you is born. Beloved Hearer, shall the joy begin with you today? It little avails you that Christ was born, or that Christ died, unless unto you a Child is born, and for you Jesus bled. A personal interest is the main point. But I am poor, says one. So were the shepherds. O you Poor, to you this mysterious child is born!

The poor have the Gospel preached unto them. He shall judge the poor and needy, and break in pieces the oppressor. But I am obscure and unknown, says one. So were the watchers on the midnight plain. Who knew the men who endured hard toil and kept their flocks by night? But you, unknown of men, are known to Godshall it not be said, that, unto you a Child is born? The Lord regards not the greatness of men, but has respect unto the lowly. But you are illiterate you say, you cannot understand much. Be it so, but unto the shepherds Christ was born, and their simplicity did not hinder their receiving Him, but even helped them to it. Be it so with yourselfreceive gladly the simple Truth as it is in Jesus. The Lord has exalted one chosen out of the people. No aristocratic Christ have I to preach to you, but the Savior of the people, the Friend of publicans and sinners!

Jesus is the true poor mens Friend. He is a Covenant for the people, given to be a Leader and Commander to the people. To you is Jesus given. O that each heart might truly say, to me is Jesus born! For if I truly believe in Jesus, unto me Christ is born, and I may be as sure of it as if an angel announced it, since the Scripture tells me that if I believe in Jesus He is mine. After the angel had said to you, he went on to say, it shall be to all people. But our translation is not accurate. The Greek is, it shall be to all the people. This refers most assuredly to the Jewish nation. There can be no question about that. If anyone looks at the original, he will not find so large and wide an expression as that given by our translators. It should be rendered to all the people.

And here let us speak a word for the Jews. How long and how sinfully has the Christian Church despised the most honorable among the nations! How barbarously has Israel been handled by the so-called Church! I felt my spirit burn indignantly within me in Rome when I stood in the Jews quarter and heard of the cruel indignities which Popery has heaped upon the Jews even until recently. At this hour there stands in the Jews quarter a Church built right in front of the entrance to it, and into this the unhappy Jews were driven forcibly on certain occasions. To this Church they were compelled to subscribesubscribe, mark you, as worshippers of the one invisible God, to the support of a system which is as leprous with idolatry as were the Canaanites whom the Lord abhorred.

Paganism is not more degrading than Romanism. Over the door of this Church is placed, in their own tongue in the Hebrew, these wordsAll day long have I stretched out My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying generation. How, by such an insult as that, could they hope to convert the Jew? The Jew saw everywhere idols which his soul abhorred and he loathed the name of Christ, because he associated it with idol worship, and I do not wonder that he did. I praise the Jew that he could not give up his own simple theism, and the worship of the true God, for such a base, degrading superstition as that which Rome presented to him!

Instead of thinking it a wonder of unbelief that the Jew is not a Christian, I honor him for his faith and his courageous resistance of a fascinating heathenism. If Romanism is Christianity I am not, neither could I be, a Christian! It were a more manly thing to be a simple Believer in one God, or even an honest doubter upon all religion, than worship such crowds of gods and goddesses as Popery has set up, and to bow, as she does, before rotten bones and dead mens winding sheets. Let the true Christian Church think lovingly of the Jew, and with respectful earnestness tell him the true Gospel. Let her sweep away superstition, and set before him the one gracious God in the Trinity of His Divine Unity.

And the day shall yet come when the Jews, who were the first Apostles to the Gentiles, the first missionaries to us who were afar off, shall be gathered in again. Until that shall be, the fullness of the Churchs Glory can never come. Matchless benefits to the world are bound up with the restoration of Israel. Their gathering in shall be as life from the dead. Jesus the Savior is the joy of all nations, but let not the chosen race be denied their peculiar share of whatever promise Holy Writ has recorded with

a special view to them.

The woes which their sins brought upon them have fallen thick and heavily. And even so let the richest blessings distil upon them. Although our translation is not literally correct, it, nevertheless, expresses a great Truth, taught plainly in the context. And, therefore, we will advance another step. The coming of Christ is a joy to all people. It is so, for the fourteenth verse saysOn earth peace, which is a wide and even unlimited expression. It adds, Good will towardsnot Jews, but menall men. The word is the generic name of the entire race, and there is no doubt that the coming of Christ does bring joy to all sorts of people. It brings a measure of joy even to those who are not Christians.

Christ does not bless them in the highest and true sense, but the influence of His teaching imparts benefits of an inferior sort, such as they are capable of receiving. For wherever the Gospel is proclaimed, it is no small blessing to all the population. Note this factthere is no land beneath the sun where there is an open Bible and a preached Gospelwhere a tyrant long can hold his place. It matters not who he is, whether pope or king. Let the pulpit be used properly for the preaching of Christ crucifiedlet the Bible be opened to be read by all menand no tyrant can long rule in peace.

England owes her freedom to the Bible. And France will never possess liberty, lasting and well-established, till she comes to reverence the Gospel which too long she has rejected. There is joy to all mankind where Christ comes. The religion of Jesus makes men think, and to make men think is always dangerous to a despots power. The religion of Jesus Christ sets a man free from superstition. When he believes in Jesus, what cares he for Papal excommunications, or whether priests give or withhold their absolution? The man no longer cringes and bows down. He is no more willing, like a beast, to be led by the nosebut, learning to think for himself and becoming a man he disdains the childish fears which once held him in slavery.

Therefore, where Jesus comes, even if men do not receive Him as the Savior, and so miss the fullest joy, yet they get a measure of benefit. And I pray God that everywhere His Gospel may be so proclaimed, and that so many may be actuated by the spirit of it that it may be better for all mankind. If men receive Christ there will be no more oppressionthe true Christian does to others as he would that they should do to himand there is no more contention of classes, nor grinding of the faces of the poor. Slavery must go down where Christianity rules, and mark you, if Romanism is once destroyed, and pure Christianity shall govern all nations, war itself must come to an end. For if there is anything which this Book denounces and counts the greatest of all crimes, it is the crime of war.

Put up your sword into your sheath, for has not He said, You shall not kill, and He meant not that it was a sin to kill one but a glory to kill a millionHe meant that bloodshed on the smallest or largest scale was sinful. Let Christ govern, and men shall break the bow and cut the spear in sunder, and burn the chariot in the fire. It is joy to all nations that Christ is born, the Prince of Peace, the King who rules in righteousness. But, Beloved, the greatest joy is to those who know Christ as a Savior. Here the song rises to a higher and more sublime note. Unto us, indeed, a Child is born, if we can say that He is our Savior who is Christ the Lord.

Let me ask each of you a few personal questions. Are your sins forgiven you for His names sake? Is the head of the serpent bruised in your soul? Does the Seed of the woman reign in sanctifying power over your nature? Oh, then, you have the joy that is to all the people in the true form of it! And, dear Brothers and Sisters, the further you submit yourself to Christ the Lordthe more completely you know Him, and are like Hethe fuller will your happiness become! Surface joy is to those who live where the Savior is preached. But the great deeps, the great fathomless deeps of solemn joy which glisten and sparkle with delight are for such as

know the Savior, obey the Anointed One, and have communion with the Lord Himself.

He is the most joyful man who is the most Christly man. I wish that some Christians were more truly Christiansthey are Christians and something else. It were much better if they were altogether Christians. Perhaps you know the legend, or perhaps true history of the awakening of St. Augustine. He dreamed that he died and went to the gates of Heaven, and the keeper of the gates said to him, Who are you? And he answered, Christianus sum, I am a Christian. But the porter replied, No, you are not a Christian, you are a Ciceronian, for your thoughts and studies were most of all directed to the works of Cicero and the classics, and you neglected the teaching of Jesus. We judge men here by that which most engrossed their thoughts, and you are judged not to be a Christian but a Ciceronian.

When Augustine awoke, he put aside the classics which he had studied, and the eloquence at which he had aimed, and he said, I will be a Christian and a theologian. And from that time he devoted his thoughts to the Word of God, and his pen and his tongue to the instruction of others in the Truths of God. Oh I would not have it said of any of you, Well, he may be somewhat a Christian, but he is far more a keen money-getting tradesman. I would not have it said, Well, he may be a Believer in Christ, but he is a good deal more a politician.

Perhaps he is a Christian, but he is most at home when he is talking about science, farming, engineering, horses, mining, navigation, or pleasure-taking. No, no, you will never know the fullness of the joy which Jesus brings to the soul unless, under the power of the Holy Spirit, you take the Lord your Master to be your All in All, and make Him the fountain of your delight. He is my Savior, my Christ, my Lordbe this your loudest boast. Then will you know the joy which the angels song predicts for men.

III. But I must pass on. The last thing in the text is The SIGN. The shepherds did not ask for a sign, but one was graciously given. Sometimes it is sinful for us to require, as an evidence, what Gods tenderness may nevertheless see fit to give as an aid to faith. Willful unbelief shall have no sign, but weak faith shall have compassionate aid. The sign that the joy of the world had come was thisthey were to go to the manger to find the Christ in it, and HE was to be the sign. Every circumstance is therefore instructive. The Babe was found wrapped in swaddling clothes. Now,

observe, as you look at this Infant, that there is not the remotest appearance of temporal power here. Mark the two little puny arms of a little babe that must be carried if it goes.

Alas, the nations of the earth look for joy in military power. By what means can we make a nation of soldiers? The Prussian method is admirable. We must have thousands upon thousands of armed men and big cannon and ironclad vessels to kill and destroy by wholesale. Is it not a nations pride to be gigantic in arms? What pride flushes the patriots cheek when he remembers that his nation can murder faster than any other people! Ah, foolish generation, you are groping in the flames of Hell to find your Heaven, raking amid blood and bones for the foul thing which you call Glory. A nations joy can never lie in the misery of others. Killing is not the path to prosperityhuge armaments are a curse to the nation, itself, as well as to its neighbors.

The joy of a nation is a golden sand over which no stream of blood has ever rippled. It is only found in that river which the streams make glad the city of God. The weakness of submissive gentleness is true power. Jesus founds His eternal empire not on force but on love. Here, O you people, see your hope! The mild pacific Prince, whose Glory is His self-sacrifice, is our true Benefactor. But look again, and you shall observe no pomp to dazzle you. Is the Child wrapped in purple and fine linen? Ah, no. Sleeps He in a cradle of gold? The manger alone is His shelter. No crown is upon the Babes headneither does a coronet surround the mothers brow. A simple maiden of Galilee, and a little Child in ordinary swaddling bands, it is all you see

*Bask not in courtly bower,   
Or sun bright hall of power,   
Pass Babel quick, and seek the holy land. From robes of Tyrian dye,   
Turn with undazzled eye   
To Bethlehems glade, and by the manger stand.*

Alas, the nations are dazzled with a vain show. The pomp of empires, the pageants of kings are their delight. How can they admire those gaudy courts in which too often glorious apparel, decorations, and rank stand in the place of virtue, chastity, and the Truth of God? When will the people cease to be children? Must they forever crave for martial music which stimulates violence, and delight in a lavish expenditure which burdens them with taxation? These make not a nation great or joyous. Bah! How has the bubble burst across yonder narrow sea. A bubble empire has collapsed. Ten thousand bayonets and millions of gold proved but a sandy foundation for a Babel throne. Vain are the men who look for joy in pomp. It lies in truth and righteousness, in peace and salvation, of which yonder new-born Prince in the garments of a peasant child is the true symbol.

Neither was there wealth to be seen at Bethlehem. Here in this quiet island, the bulk of men are comfortably seeking to acquire their thousands by commerce and manufactures. We are the sensible people who follow the main chance, and are not to be deluded by ideas of Glory. We are making all the money we can, and wondering that other nations waste so much in war. The main prop and pillar of Englands joy is to be found, as some tell us, in the Three per Cents, in the possession of colonies, in the progress of machinery, in steadily increasing our capital. Is not Mammon a smiling deity?

But, here, in the cradle of the worlds hope at Bethlehem, I see far more of poverty than wealth. I perceive no glitter of gold, or spangle of silver. I perceive only a poor Babe, so poor, so very poor, that He is laid in a manger. And His mother is a carpenters wife, a woman who wears neither silk nor gem. Not in your gold, O Britons, will ever lie your joy, but in the Gospel enjoyed by all classes! The Gospel freely preached and joyfully received! Jesus, by raising us to spiritual wealth, redeems us from the chains of Mammon, and in that liberty gives us joy.

And here, too, I see no superstition. I know the artist paints angels in the skies, and surrounds the scene with a mysterious light, of which traditions tongue of falsehood has said that it made midnight as bright as noon. This is merely fiction. There was nothing more there than the stable, the straw the oxen ate, and perhaps the beasts themselves, and the Child in the most plain, simplest manner, wrapped as other children are. The cherubs were invisible and of haloes there were none. Around this birth of joy was no sign of superstitionthat demon dared not intrude its tricks and posturing into the sublime spectacleit would have been, there, as much out of place as a harlequin in the holy of holies.

A simple Gospel, a plain Gospel, as plain as that Babe wrapped in the most common garments, is this day the only hope for men! Be you wise and believe in Jesus, and abhor all the lies of Rome, and inventions of those who ape her detestable abominations. Nor does the joy of the world lie in philosophy. You could not have made a schoolmens puzzle of Bethlehem if you had tried to do so. It was just a Child in the manger and a Jewish woman looking on and nursing it, and a carpenter standing by. There was no metaphysical difficulty there, of which men could say, A doctor of divinity is needed to explain it, and an assembly of divines must expound it.

It is true the wise men came there, but it was only to adore and offer giftswould that all the wise had been as wise as they. Alas, human subtlety has disputed over the manger, and logic has darkened counsel with its words. But this is one of mans many inventionsGods work was sublimely simple. Here was, The Word made flesh, to dwell among us, a mystery for faith, but not a football for argument. Mysterious, yet the greatest simplicity that was ever spoken to human ears, and seen by mortal eyes. And such is the Gospel, in the preaching of which our Apostle said, we use great plainness of speech.

Away, away, away with your learned sermons, and your fine talk, and your pretentious philosophies. These never created a jot of happiness in this world. Fine spun theories are fair to gaze on, and to bewilder fools, but they are of no use to practical men! They comfort not the sons of toil, nor cheer the daughters of sorrow. The man of common sense who feels the daily rub and tear of this poor world needs richer consolation than your novel theologies, or neologies, can give him. In a simple Christand in a simple faith in that Christthere is a peace deep and lasting. In a plain, poor mans Gospel, there is a joy and a bliss unspeakable, of which thousands can speak, and speak with confidence, too, for they declare

what they know, and testify what they have seen.

I say, then, to you who would know the only true peace and lasting joy, come you to the Babe of Bethlehemin after days the Man of Sorrows the substitutionary Sacrifice for sinners. Come, you little children, you boys and girls, come! For He also was a boy. The holy Child Jesus is the childrens Savior, and says still, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not. Come here, you maidens, you who are still in the morning of your beauty, and, like Mary, rejoice in God your Savior! The virgin bore Him on her bosom, so come you and bear Him in your hearts, saying, Unto us a Child is born, onto us a Son is given.

And you, you men in the plenitude of your strength, remember how Joseph cared for Him, and watched with reverent solicitude His tender years. Be you to His cause as a Father and a helper. Sanctify your strength to His service. And you women advanced in years, you matrons and widows, come like Anna and bless the Lord that you have seen the salvation of Israel. And you gray heads, who like Simeon are ready to depart, come and take the Savior in your arms, adoring Him as your Savior and your All. You shepherds, you simple hearted, you who toil for your daily bread, come and adore the Savior. And stand not back you wise men, you who know by experience and who by meditation peer into deep Truthcome, and like the sages of the East bow low before His Presence and make it your honor to pay honor to Christ the Lord.

For my own part, the Incarnate God is all my hope and trust. I have seen the worlds religion at the fountain head, and my heart has sickened within me. I come back to preach, by Gods help, yet more earnestly the Gospel, the simple Gospel of the Son of Man. Jesus, Master, I take You to be mine forever! May all in this house, through the rich Grace of God, be led to do the same, and may they all be Yours, great Son of God, in the day of Your appearing, for Your loves sake. Amen.

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THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CAROL   
NO. 168

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 20, 1857 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men. Luke 2:14.**

IT is superstitious to worship angelsit is but proper to love them. Although it would be a high sin and an act of misdemeanor against the Sovereign Court of Heaven to pay the slightest adoration to the mightiest angel, yet it would be unkind and unseemly if we did not give to holy angels a place in our hearts warmest love. In fact, he that contemplates the character of angels and marks their many deeds of sympathy with men and kindness towards them, cannot resist the impulse of his naturethe impulse of love towards them.

The one incident in angelic history to which our text refers is enough to weld our hearts to them forever. How free from envy the angels were! Christ did not come from Heaven to save their compeers when they fell. When Satan, the mighty angel, dragged with him a third part of the stars of Heaven, Christ did not stoop from His throne to die for them. But He left them to be reserved in chains and darkness until the last great day. Yet angels did not envy men. Though they remembered that He took not up angels, yet they did not murmur when He took up the seed of Abraham. And though the blessed Master had never condescended to take the angels form, they did not think it beneath them to express their joy when they found Him arrayed in the body of an infant.

How free, too, they were from pride! They were not ashamed to come and tell the news to humble shepherds. Methinks they had as much joy in pouring out their songs that night before the shepherds, who were watching with their flocks, as they would have had if they had been commanded by their Master to sing their hymn in the halls of Caesar. Mere menmen possessed with pride, think it a fine thing to preach before kings and princes. They think it great condescension now and then to have to minister to the humble crowd. Not so the angels. They stretched their willing wings and gladly sped from their bright seats above to tell the shepherds on the plain by night the marvelous story of an Incarnate God. Mark how well they told the story and surely you will love them!

Not with the stammering tongue of him that tells a tale in which he has no interest. Nor even with the feigned interest of a man that would move the passions of others, when he feels no emotion himself. But with joy

and gladness, such as angels only can know. They sang the story out, for they could not stay to tell it in heavy prose. They sang, Glory to God on high and on earth peace, good will towards men. Methinks they sang it with gladness in their eyeswith their hearts burning with love and with breasts as full of joy as if the good news to man had been good news to themselves. And, verily, it was good news to them, for the heart of sympathy makes good news to others good news to itself.

Do you not love the angels? You will not bow before them and there you are right. But will you not love them? Does it not make one part of your anticipation of Heaven, that in Heaven you shall dwell with the holy angels, as well as with the spirits of the just made perfect? Oh, how sweet to think that these holy and lovely beings are our guardians every hour! They keep watch and ward about us, both in the burning noontide and in the darkness of the night. They keep us in all our ways. They bear us up in their hands, lest at any time we dash our feet against stones. They unceasingly minister unto us who are the heirs of salvation. Both by day and night they are our watchers and our guardians, for know you not, that the angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him?

Let us turn aside, having just thought of angels for a moment, to think of this song, rather than of the angels themselves. Their song was brief, but as Kitto excellently remarks, it was well worthy of angels expressing the greatest and most blessed truths, in words so few, that they become to an acute apprehension almost oppressive by the pregnant fullness of their meaning.Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men. We shall, hoping to be assisted by the Holy Spirit, look at these words of the angels in a fourfold manner. I shall just suggest some instructive thoughts arising from these words, then some emotional thoughts. Then a few prophetic thoughts. And afterwards, one or two perceptive thoughts.

I. First then, in the words of our text. There are many INSTRUCTIVE THOUGHTS. The angels sang something which men could understand something which men ought to understandsomething which will make men much better if they will understand it. The angels were singing about Jesus who was born in the manger. We must look upon their song as being built upon this foundation. They sang of Christ and the salvation which He came into this world to work out. And what they said of this salvation was thisthey said first, that it gave glory to God. Secondly that it gave peace to man. And thirdly, that it was a token of Gods good will towards the human race.

1. Firs, they said that this salvation gave glory to God. They had been present on many august occasions and they had joined in many a solemn chorus to the praise of their Almighty Creator. They were present at the creation: The morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. They had seen many a planet fashioned between the palms of Jehovah and wheeled by His eternal hands through the infinitude of space. They had sung solemn songs over many a world which the Great One had created. We doubt not, they had often chanted, Blessing and honor and glory and majesty and power and dominion and might be unto Him that sits on the Throne, manifesting Himself in the work of creation. I doubt not, too, that their songs had gathered force through ages. As when first created, their first breath was song, so when they saw God create new worlds then their song received another note. They rose a little higher in the gamut of adoration.

But this time, when they saw God stoop from His throne and become a Babe, hanging upon a womans breast, they lifted their notes higher still and reaching to the uttermost stretch of angelic musicthey gained the highest notes of the Divine scale of praise and they sung, Glory to God in the highest, for higher in goodness they felt God could not go. Thus their highest praise they gave to Him in the highest act of His godhead. If it is true that there is a hierarchy of angels, rising tier upon tier in magnificence and dignityif the Apostle teaches us that there are angels and principalities and powers and thrones and dominions, among these blessed inhabitants of the upper worldI can suppose that when the intelligence was first communicated to those angels that are to be found upon the outskirts of the heavenly world, when they looked down from Heaven and saw the newborn Babe, they sent the news backward to the place from where the miracle first proceeded, singing

*Angels, from the realms of glory,   
Wing your downward flight to earth,   
You who sing creations story,   
Now proclaim Messiahs birth.   
Come and worship,   
Worship Christ, the newborn King.*

And as the message ran from rank to rank, at last the presence angels, those four cherubim that perpetually watch around the throne of God those wheels with eyestook up the strain and gathering up the song of all the inferior grades of angels, surmounted the Divine pinnacle of harmony with their own solemn chant of adoration upon which the entire host shouted, The highest angels praise You Glory to God in the highest. Yes, there is no mortal that can ever dream how magnificent was that song. Then, note, if angels shouted before and when the world was made, their hallelujahs were more full, more strong, more magnificentif not more heartywhen they saw Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary to be mans redeemerGlory to God in the highest.

What is the instructive lesson to be learned from this first syllable of the angels song? Why thisthat salvation is Gods highest glory. He is glorified in every dew drop that twinkles in the morning sun. He is magnified in every wood flower that blossoms in the copse, although it lives to blush unseen and wave its sweetness in the forest air. God is glorified in every bird that warbles on the sprayin every lamb that skips the mead. Do not the fishes in the sea praise Him? From the tiny minnow to the huge leviathan, do not all creatures that swim the waters bless and praise His name? Do not all created things extol Him? Is there anything beneath the skysave manthat does not glorify God?

Do not the stars exalt Him when they write His name upon the azure of Heaven in their golden letters? Does not the lightning adore Him when it flashes its brightness in arrows of light piercing the midnight darkness? Do not thunders extol Him when they roll like drums in the march of the God of armies? Do not all things exalt Him, from the least even to the greatest? But sing, sing, oh universe, till you have exhausted yourself you can not afford a song so sweet as the song of Incarnation. Though creation may be a majestic organ of praise it cannot reach the compass of the golden canticleIncarnation! There is more in that than in creation, more melody in Jesus in the manger than there is in worlds on worlds rolling their grandeur round the Throne of the Most High.

Pause, Christian, and consider this a minute. See how every attribute is here magnified. Lo, what wisdom is here. God becomes man that God may be Just and the Justifier of the ungodly. Lo, what power, for where is power so great as when it conceals power? What power, that Godhead should unrobe itself and become Man! Behold, what love is thus revealed to us when Jesus becomes a Man. Behold, what faithfulness! How many promises are this day kept? How many solemn obligations are this hour discharged? Tell me one attribute of God that is not manifest in Jesus and your ignorance shall be the reason why you have not seen it so. The whole of God is glorified in Christ. And though some part of the name of God is written in the universe, it is here best readin Him who was the Son of Man and, yet, the Son of God.

But let me say one word here before I go away from this point. We must learn from this, that if salvation glorifies God, glorifies Him in the highest degree and makes the highest creatures praise Him, this one reflection may be addedthat doctrine which glorifies man in salvation cannot be the Gospel. For salvation glorifies God. The angels were no Arminians they sang, Glory to God in the highest. They believe in no doctrine which uncrowns Christ and puts the crown upon the head of mortals. They believe in no system of faith which makes salvation dependent upon the creature and which really gives the creature the praise. For what is it less than for a man to save himself, if the whole dependence of salvation rests upon his own free will? No, my Brethren. There may be some preachers that delight to preach a doctrine that magnifies man. But in their Gospel angels have no delight. The only glad tidings that made the angels sing are those that put God first, God last, God midst and God without endin the salvation of His creaturesand put the crown wholly and alone upon the head of Him that saves without a helper. Glory to God in the highest, is the angels song.

2. When they had sung this, they sang what they had never sung before. Glory to God in the highest, was an old, old song. They had sung that from before the foundations of the world. But, now, they sang as it were a new song before the Throne of Godfor they added this stanza on earth, peace. They did not sing that in the garden. There was peace there, it seemed a thing of course and scarce worth singing of. There was more than peace there. For there was glory to God there. But now man had fallenand since the day when cherubim with fiery swords drove out the man there had been no peace on earth, save in the breast of some believers, who had obtained peace from the living fountain of this incarnation of Christ. Wars had raged from the ends of the world. Men had slaughtered one another, heaps on heaps. There had been wars within as well as wars without. Conscience had fought with manSatan had tormented man with thoughts of sin.

There had been no peace on earth since Adam fell. But, now, when the newborn King made His appearance, the swaddling band with which He was wrapped up was the white flag of peace. That manger was the place where the treaty was signed, whereby warfare should be stopped between mans conscience and himself, mans conscience and his God. It was then, that day, the trumpet blewSheathe the sword, oh man, sheathe the sword, oh conscience, for God is now at peace with man and man at peace with God. Do you not feel, my Brethren, that the Gospel of God is peace to man? Where else can peace be found but in the message of Jesus? Go legalist, work for peace with toil and pain and you shall never find it. Go, you that trust in the Lawgo to Sinai.

Look to the flames that Moses saw and shrink and tremble and despairfor peace is nowhere to be found, but in Him, of whom it is said, This man shall be Peace. And what a Peace it is, Beloved! It is peace like a river and righteousness like the waves of the sea. It is the peace of God that passes all understanding, which keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. This sacred peace between the pardoned soul and God the Pardoner. This marvelous connection between the sinner and His Judgethis was it that the angels sung when they said, peace on earth. 3. And then they wisely ended their song with a third note. They said,

Good will to man. Philosophers have said that God has a good will toward man. But I never knew any man who derived much comfort from their philosophical assertion. Wise men have thought from what we have seen in creation that God had much good will toward manor else His works would never have been so constructed for their comfort. But I never heard of any man who could risk his souls peace upon such a faint hope as that. But I have not only heard of thousands, but I know them who are quite sure that God has a good will towards men. And if you ask their reason, they will give a full and perfect answer. They say, He has good will toward man for He gave His Son. No greater proof of kindness between the Creator and His subjects possibly can be afforded than when the Creator gives His only begotten and well beloved Son to die.

Though the first note is God-like and though the second note is peaceful, this third note melts my heart the most. Some think of God as if He were a morose Being who hated all mankind. Some picture Him as if He were some abstract subsistence taking no interest in our affairs. Hark, God has good will toward men. You know what good will means? Well all that it means and more, God has to you, you sons and daughters of Adam. Swearer, you have cursed God. He has not fulfilled His curse on you. He has good will towards you, though you have no good will towards Him. Infidel, you have sinned high and hard against the Most High. He has said no hard things against you, for He has good will towards men. Poor sinner, you have broken His Laws. You are half afraid to come to the throne of His mercy lest He should spurn youhear this and be comfortedGod has good will towards men, so good a will that He has said and said it with an oath, too, As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.

So good a will moreover that He has even condescended to say, Come, now, let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow. And if you say, Lord, how shall I know that You have this good will towards me, He points to yonder manger and says, Sinner, if I had not a good will towards you, would I have parted with My Son? If I had not good will towards the human race, would I have given up My Son to become one of that race that He might by so doing redeem them from death? You that doubt the Masters love, look to that circle of angels. See their blaze of gloryhear their song and let your doubts die away in that sweet music and be buried in a shroud of harmony.

He has good will to men. He is willing to pardon. He passes by iniquity, transgression and sin. And mark you, if Satan shall then add, But though God has good will, yet He cannot violate His justice, therefore His mercy may be ineffective and you may diethen listen to that first note of the song, Glory to God in the highest, and reply to Satan and all his temptations, that when God shows good will to a penitent sinner, there is not only peace in the sinners heart, but it brings glory to every attribute of God and so He can be just and yet justify the sinner and glorify Himself!

I do not pretend to say that I have opened all the instructions contained in these three sentences, but I may perhaps direct you into a train of thought that may serve you for the week. I hope that all through the week you will have a truly merry Christmas by feeling the power of these words and knowing the unction of them. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.

II. Next, I have to present to you some EMOTIONAL THOUGHTS. Friends, does not this verse, this song of angels, stir your heart with happiness? When I read that and found the angels singing it, I thought to myself, Then if the angels ushered in the Gospels great Head with singing, ought I not to preach with singing? And ought not my Hearers to live with singing? Ought not their hearts to be glad and their spirits to rejoice? Well, I thought, there are some somber religionists who were born in a dark night in December that think a smile upon the face is wicked and believe that for a Christian to be glad and rejoice is to be inconsistent. Ah, I wish these gentlemen had seen the angels when they sang about Christ! For if angels sang about His birth, though it was no concern of theirs, certainly men ought to sing about it as long as they livesing about it when they die and sing about it when they live in Heaven forever! I do long to see in the midst of the Church more of a singing Christianity. The last few years have been breeding in our midst a groaning and unbelieving Christianity. Now, I doubt not its sincerity, but I do doubt its healthy character. I say it may be true and real enough. God forbid I should say a word against the sincerity of those who practice it but it is a sickly religion.

Watts hit the mark when he said   
*Religion never was designed   
To make our pleasures less.*

It is designed to do away with some of our pleasuresbut it gives us many moreto make up for what it takes away. It does not make them less. O you that see in Christ nothing but a subject to stimulate your doubts and make the tears run down your cheeksO you that always say   
come here and see the angels! Do they tell their story with groans and

*Lord, what a wretched land is this, That yields us no supplies,*

sobs and sighs? Ah, no. They shout aloud, Glory to God in the highest. Now, imitate them my dear Brethren. If you are professors of religion, try always to have a cheerful carriage. Let others mourn. But

*Why should the children of a king   
Go mourning all their days?*

Anoint your head and wash your faceappear not unto men to fast. Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say unto you rejoice. Specially this week be not ashamed to be glad. You need not think it a wicked thing to be happy. Penance and whipping and misery are no such very virtuous things, after all. The damned are miserable. Let the saved be happy. Why should you hold fellowship with the lost by feelings of perpetual mourning? Why not rather anticipate the joys of Heaven and begin to sing on earth that song which you will never need to end? The first emotion, then, that we ought to cherish in our hearts is the emotion of joy and gladness.

Well, what next? Another emotion is that of confidence. I am not sure that I am right in calling that an emotion, but still in me it is so much akin to it that I will venture to be wrong if I am so. Now, if when Christ came on this earth God had sent some black creature down from Heaven, (if there are such creatures there), to tell us, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men. And if with a frowning brow and a stammering tongue he delivered his messageif I had been there and heard itI should have hesitated to believe him. I should have said, You dont look like the messenger that God would sendstammering fellow as you arewith such glad news as this.

But when the angels came there was no doubting the truth of what they said, because it was quite certain that the angels believed it. They told it as if they did, for they told it with singing, with joy and gladness. If some friend, having heard that a legacy was left you and should come to you with a solemn countenance and a tongue like a funeral bell, saying, Do you know So-and-So has left you £10,000? Why, you would say, Ah, I dare say, and laugh in his face. But if your brother should suddenly burst into your room and exclaim, I say, what do you think? You are a rich man, So-and-So has left you £10,000! Why you would say, I think it is very likely to be true, for he looks so happy over it.

Well, when these angels came from Heaven they told the news just as if they believed it. And though I have often wickedly doubted my Lords good will, I think I never could have doubted it while I heard those angels singing. No, I should say, The messengers themselves are proof of the truth, for it seems they have heard it from Gods lips. They have no doubt about it, for see how joyously they tell the news? Now, poor Soul, you that are afraid lest God should destroy you and you think that God will never have mercy upon youlook at the singing angels and doubt if you dare. Do not go to the synagogue of long-faced hypocrites to hear the minister who preaches with a nasal twang, with misery in his face, while he tells you that God has good will towards men.

I know you wont believe what he says, for he does not preach with joy in his countenance. He is telling you good news with a grunt and you are not likely to receive it. But go straightway to the plain where Bethlehem shepherds sat by night and when you hear the angels singing out the Gospel, by the grace of God upon you, you cannot help believing that they manifestly feel the preciousness of telling. Blessed Christmas that brings such creatures as angels to confirm our faith in Gods good will to men!

III. I must now bring before you the third point. There are some PROPHETIC UTTERANCES contained in these words. The angels sang Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men. But I look around and what do I see in the whole wide world? I do not see God honored. I see the heathen bowing down before their idols. I mark the Romanist casting himself before the rotten rags of his relics and the ugly figures of his images. I look about me and I see tyranny lording it over the bodies and souls of men. I see God forgotten. I see a worldly race pursuing mammon. I see a bloody race pursuing Moloch. I see ambition riding like Nimrod over the land, God forgotten, His name dishonored. And was this what the angels sang about? Is this what made them sing Glory to God in the highest? Ah, no. There are brighter days approaching. They sang Peace on earth.

But I hear still the clarion of war. And the cannons horrid roarnot yet have they turned the sword into a plowshare and the spear into a pruning hook! War still reigns. Is this all that the angels sang about? And while I see wars to the ends of the earth, am I to believe that this was all the angels expected? Ah, no, Brethren. The angels song is big with prophecyit travails in birth with glories. A few more years and he that lives them out shall see why angels sang. A few more years and He that will come shall come and will not tarry. Christ the Lord will come again and when He comes He shall cast the idols from their thrones. He shall dash down every fashion of heresy and every shape of idolatry. He shall reign from pole to pole with illimitable sway. He shall reign, when like a scroll, yonder blue heavens have passed away.

No strife shall vex Messiahs reign, no blood shall then be shed. Theyll hang the useless helmet high and study war no more. The hour is approaching when the temple of Janus shall be shut forever and when cruel Mars shall be hooted from the earth. The day is coming when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, when the leopard shall lie down with the kidwhen the weaned child shall put his hand upon the cockatrice den

and play with the asp. The hour approaches. The first streaks of the sunlight have made glad the age in which we live. Lo, He comes with trumpets and with clouds of glory! He shall come for whom we look with joyous expectation, whose coming shall be glory to His redeemed and confusion to His enemies. Ah, Brethren, when the angels sang this there was an echo through the long aisles of a glorious future. That echo was

*Hallelujah! Christ the Lord   
God Omnipotent shall reign.*

Yes, and doubtless the angels heard by faith the fullness of the song *Hark! the song of jubilee   
Loud as mighty thunders roar,   
Or the fullness of the sea,   
When it breaks upon the shore.*

Christ the Lord Omnipotent reigns.   
IV. Now I have one more lesson for you and I have done. That lesson is   
PRECEPTIVE. I wish everybody that keeps Christmas this year would   
keep it as the angels kept it. There are many persons who, when they talk   
about keeping Christmas, mean by that the cutting of the bands of their   
religion for one day in the year, as if Christ were the Lord of misrule, as if   
the birth of Christ should be celebrated like the orgies of Bacchus. There   
are some very religious people that on Christmas would never forget to go  
to Church in the morning. They believe Christmas to be nearly as holy as   
Sunday, for they reverence the tradition of the elders. Yet their way of  
spending the rest of the day is very remarkablefor if they see their way   
straight up stairs to their bed at night, it must be by accident! They would   
not consider they had kept Christmas in a proper manner if they did not  
verge on gluttony and drunkenness.   
They are many who think Christmas cannot possibly be kept except  
there be a great shout of merriment and mirth in the house and added to  
that the boisterousness of sin. Now, my Brethren, although we, as   
successors of the Puritans, will not keep the day in any religious sense   
whatever, attaching nothing more to it than to any other daybelieving   
that every day may be a Christmas for all we know and wishing to make   
every day Christmas if we canyet we must try to set an example to   
others how to behave on that day. And especially since the angels gave   
glory to God. Let us do the same.   
Once more the angels said, Peace to men. Let us labor if we can to  
make peace next Christmas day. Now, old gentleman, you wont take your  
son inhe has offended you. Fetch him at Christmas. Peace on earth.   
You know that is a Christmas carol. Make peace in your family. Now,  
Brother, you have made a vow that you will never speak to your brother again. Go after him and say, Oh, my dear fellow, let not this days sun   
go down upon our wrath. Fetch him in and give him your hand. Now, Mr. Tradesman, you have an opponent in trade and you have said   
some very hard words about him lately. If you do not make the matter up   
today, or tomorrow, or as soon as you can, yet do it on that day. That is  
the way to keep Christmaspeace on earth and glory to God. And oh, if   
you have anything on your conscience, anything that prevents your  
having peace of mindkeep your Christmas in your chamber, praying to   
God to give you peace. For it is peace on earth, mind you, peace in  
yourself, peace with yourself, peace with your fellow men, peace with your   
God. And do not think you have well celebrated that day till you can say,  
O God   
*With the world, myself and You   
Wherever I sleep at peace will be.*   
And when the Lord Jesus has become your Peace, remember, there is   
another thing, good will towards men. Do not try to keep Christmas   
without keeping good will towards men. You are a gentleman and have   
servants. Well, try and set their chimneys on fire with a large piece of   
good, substantial beef for them. If you are men of wealth, you have poor in   
your neighborhood. Find something wherewith to clothe the naked and  
feed the hungry and make glad the mourner. Remember, it is good will   
towards men. Try, if you can, to show them good will at this special   
season. And if you will do that, the poor will say with meindeed, they  
wish there were six Christmases in the year.   
Let each one of us go from this place determined that if we are angry all   
the year round, this next week shall be an exception. That if we have   
snarled at everybody last year, this Christmas time we will strive to be   
kindly affectionate to others. And if we have lived all this year at enmity   
with God, I pray that by His Spirit He may this week give us peace with  
Him. And then, indeed, my Brothers and Sisters, it will be the merriest   
Christmas we ever had in all our lives. You are going home to your father

and mother, young menmany of you are going from your shops to your   
homes.   
You remember what I preached on last Christmas time. Go home to  
your friends and tell them what the Lord has done for your soul and that   
will make a blessed round of stories at the Christmas fire. If you will each   
of you tell your parents how the Lord met with you in the house of  
prayerhow, when you left home, you were a happy, wild bladebut have  
now come back to love your mothers God and read your fathers Bible  
oh, what a happy Christmas that will make! What more shall I say? May  
God give you peace with yourselves. May He give you good will towards all your friends, your enemies and your neighbors. And may He give you   
grace to give glory to God in the highest.   
I will say no more, except at the close of this sermon to wish everyone   
of you, when the day shall come, the happiest Christmas you ever had in   
your lives   
*Now with angels round the throne, Cherubim and seraphim,   
And the Church, which still is one, Let us swell the solemn hymn. Glory to the great I AM!   
Glory to the Victim Lamb.   
Blessing, honor, glory, might, And dominion infinite,   
To the Father of our Lord,   
To the Spirit and the Word;   
As it was all worlds before,   
Is and shall be evermore.*

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2915 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A VISIT TO BETHLEHEM   
NO. 2915

[The accompanying Sermon is substantially the same as I preached on the Sunday evening before Christmas day. Some of my members expressed their regret that the reporter was not present. I am not myself aware that there is any novelty except in the arrangement. As for the Truths of God, themselves, they are the simple old facts in which the saints of all generations rejoice. Of course it is not in my power to reproduce the exact words I then employed, but, with just the differences between the effusion of ones pen and the utterance of ones tongue, I now publish it and pray God to acknowledge it with His gracious blessing.C. H. S.]

(Notwithstanding the above note, which is in Mr. Spurgeons handwriting on the manuscript of the sermon, the publishers cannot find any trace of its publication. They are very glad to be able to issue it just 50 years after it was preached).

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1904.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,** AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 24, 1854.

**Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us.   
Luke 2:15.**

NOT to Bethlehem as it now is, but to Bethlehem as it once was, I would lead your meditation this evening.   
Were you to visit the site of that ancient city of Judah as it is at present, you would find little enough to edify your hearts. About six miles south of Jerusalem, on the slope of a hill, lies a small, irregular village, never at any time considerable either in its extent or because of the wealth of its inhabitants. The only building worthy of notice is a convent. Should your fancy paint, as you approach it, a courtyard, a stable, or a manger, you would be sorely disappointed on your arrival! Tawdry decorations are all that would greet your eyesrather adapted to obliterate than to preserve the sacred interest with which a Christian would regard the place. You might walk upon the marble floor of a chapel and gaze on walls bedecked with pictures and studded with the fantastic dolls and other nicknacks which are usually found in Roman Catholic places of worship. Within a small grotto you might observe the exact spot that superstition has assigned to the nativity of our Lord. There a star, composed of silver and precious stones, surrounded by golden lamps, might remind you, but merely as a parody, of the simple story of the Evangelists. Truly, Bethlehem was always little, if not the least, among the thousands of Judahand only famous for its historic associations.   
So, Beloved, let us now go to Bethlehem as it waslet us, if possible, bring the wondrous story of that Child born, that Son given, down to our own times. Imagine the event to be occurring just now. I will try to paint the picture for you with vivid colors, that you may apprehend afresh the great Truth of God and be impressed, as you ought to be, with the facts concerning the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.   
I propose now to make A VISIT TO BETHLEHEM and I need five companions to render the visit instructive. So I would have, first, an aged Jew. Next, an ancient Gentile. Then, a convicted sinner. Next, a young Believer. And, last of all, an advanced Christian. Their remarks can scarcely fail to please and profit us. Afterwards I should like to take a whole family to the manger, let them all look at the Divine Infant and hear what each one has to say about Him.   
I. To begin, then, I WOULD GO TO BETHLEHEM WITH AN AGED JEW.   
Come on, my venerable, long-bearded Brotheryou are an Israelite, indeed, for your name is Simeon. Do you see the Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger? Yes, he does and, overpowered by the sight, he clasps the Child in his arms and exclaims, Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation. Here, says this faithful son of Abraham, is the fulfillment of a thousand prophecies and promises! The hope, the expectation and the joy of my noble ancestry! Here is the Antitype of all those mystic symbols and typical offerings enjoined in the Laws of Moses. You, O Son of the Highest, are Abrahams promised Seed, the Shiloh whose coming Jacob foretold, great Davids greater Son and Israels rightful King! Our Prophets did herald your coming in each prophetic page. Our bards vied with one another who should chant Your praise in sweetest stanzas! And now, O happy hourthese poor dim eyes do greet Your beauteous form! It is enoughand more than enoughO God! I ask not that I may live any longer on earth! So speaks the aged Jew and, as he speaks, I mark the rapturous smile that lights up every feature of his face and listen to the deep, mellow tones of his tremulous voice. As he gazes on the tender Baby, I hear him quote Isaiahs words, He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant and then, as he glances aside at the virgin-mother, descendant of the royal house of David, he quickly looks back to the sinless Baby and says, A root out of a dry ground. Farewell, venerable Jew, your talk sounds sweet in my earsmay the day soon dawn when all your brethren shall return to their fatherland and there confess our Jesus as their Messiah and their King!   
II. My next companion shall be AN ANCIENT GENTILE.   
He is an intelligent man. Do not ask me any questions concerning his creed. Deeply versed in the works of God in Nature, he has glimmering, flickering Light of God enough to detect the moral darkness by which he is surrounded, albeit the Truth of the Gospel has not yet found an entrance into his heart. Call him a skeptic, from the heathen point of view, if you please, but his is not a willful perversion of the heart, it is rather that transition state of the mind wherein false hopes are rejected, but the true hope has not yet been espoused. This Gentile is staying at Jerusalem and we walk and talk together as we bend our steps toward Bethlehem. He has told me what pleasure he feels in reading the Jewish Scriptures and how he has often longed for the dawn of that day which their seers predict. Now we enter the housea star shines brightly in the sky and hovers over the stablewe look at the Child and my comrade exclaims in ecstasy, a Light to lighten the Gentiles! Fair Child of promise, he says, Your birth shall be a joy to all people! Prince of Peace, Yours shall be a peaceful reign! Kings shall bring presents to You; all nations shall serve You. The poor shall rejoice in Your advent, for justice shall be done to them by You. And oppressors shall tremble at Your coming, for judgment upon them shall be pronounced by Your lips.   
Then sweetly did he speak of the hopes which had bloomed in that birth-chamber. He looked as if, in that same hour, he saw the application of many an ancient promise with the letter of which he was already acquainted, to the wonderful Child he there saw. It was refreshing to hear that entire quote from the evangelical Prophet, words like these, The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.  
As I bid adieu to this friend, you must allow me to offer you one or two of my own reflections. When God, in His anger, hid His face from the house of Jacob, He lifted up the Light of His Countenance on the Gentiles. When the fruitful land became a desert, the wilderness, at the same time, began to blossom as the garden of the Lord. Moses had anticipated both of these events and the Inspired Prophets had foreseen one as much as the other. The heart of the Jewish people made gross, the heaviness of their eyes and the dullness of their ears are not more striking as an exact fulfillment of Divine Judgment, than the extreme susceptibility of the Gentile mind to receive the evidence of our Lords Messiahship and to embrace His Gospel! Thus had Jehovah said, fifteen hundred years before, I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people. I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. Marvel not, then, but admire the crisis in history when Paul and Barnabas were commissioned to say to the Jews who rejected the Gospel, Lo, we turn to the Gentiles.   
I have consulted the map and looked with intense emotion at the route which Paul and Barnabas took on their first missionary journey. Antioch, the city from which they went forth, is situated directly North of Jerusalemand there, in not very unequal proportions, they could find both Jews and Gentiles. To the Jew first, was according to the Divine Injunction and, on their own nation rejecting the Grace of God, lo, they turned to the Gentiles with a result immediately following that greatly cheered them, for the Gentiles heard with gladness and glorified the Word of the Lord! As you follow the various journeys of the Apostle Paul, you will see that his course was ever Northward, or, rather, in a North-Westerly directionand so the tidings of the Gospel traveled on until the Church of the Redeemed found a central point in our highly-favored island!

I think I hear some of you say, We are not antiquarian enough to appreciate the society of your two venerable companions. Well then, Beloved, the three that follow shall be drawn from among yourselvesand it may be that you will discover your own thoughts expressed in the sketches I am about to add.   
III. Next in order is THE AWAKENED SINNER.   
Come here, my Sister, I am glad to see you and I shall have much pleasure in your company to Bethlehem. Why do you start back? Do not be afraid! There is nothing to terrify you here. Come in! Come in! With trembling apprehension my Sister advances to the rough crib where the young Child lies. She looks as if she feared to rejoice and is beyond measure astonished at herself that she does not faint. She says to me, And is this, Sir, really and truly the great Mystery of godliness? Do I, in that manger, behold God manifest in the flesh? I expected to see something very different. Looking into her face, I clearly perceived that she could scarcely believe for joy. A humble, but not uninteresting visitor to the birthplace of my Lord is this trembling penitent. I wish I could have many like her out of this congregation tonight. You would see how Mystery is dissolved in mercy! No flaming sword turning every way obstructs your entrance. No ticket of admission is demanded by a surly menial at the door. No favor is shown to rank or titleyou may go freely in to see the noblest Child of woman born in the humblest cot wherein infants ever nestled! Nor does a visible tiara of light encircle His brow. Too humble, I assure you, for the fancy of the poet to describe, or the pencil of the artist to sketchlike a poor mans child, he is wrapped in swaddling clothes and cradled in a manger. It needs faith to believe what the eyes of sense never could discern as you look upon the Prince of Life in such humble guise!   
IV. My fourth companion is A YOUNG BELIEVER.   
Well, my Brother, you and I have often had sweet communion together concerning the things of the Kingdom. Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us. I mark the sacred cheerfulness of my young friends countenance as he approaches the Incarnate Mystery! Often have I heard him discussing curious doctrinal subtleties, but now, with calmness of spirit, he looks on the face of the Divine Child and says, Truth is sprung out of the earth, for a woman has brought forth her Son and righteousness has looked down from Heaven, for God has, of a truth, revealed Himself in that Baby. He looks so wistfully at the young Child, as if a fresh spring of holy gratitude had been opened in his heart. No vision, no imagination, no myth here, he says, but a real partaker of our flesh and blood! He has not taken on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. Heaven and earth have united to make us blessed. Might and weakness have joined hands here!   
He pauses to worship, then speaks again, In what a small, weak, slender Tabernacle do You, O glorious God, now deign to dwell! Surely, mercy and truth have here met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other! O Jesus, Savior, You are Mercy itselfthe tender mercy of our God is embodied in You. You are the Truththe very Truth which the Prophets longed to see and into which the angels desire to lookthe Truth my soul so long sought for, but never found till I beheld Your face. Once I thought that the Truth was hidden in some profound treatise, or in some learned book, but now I know that it is revealed in You, O Jesus, my Kinsman, yet Your Fathers equal! And, sweet Baby, You are also Righteousnessthe only righteousness that God can accept. What condescension, yet what patience! Ah, dear Child, how still You lie! I wonder that, conscious of your Divine Power, you can thus endure the weary, lingering hours of Infancy with humility so strange, so rare! I think if You had stood by me and watched over me in my infant weakness, that would have been a service that I could well admire, but tis past imaginations utmost stretch to realize what it must be for You to be thus feeble, thus helpless, thus needing to be fed and waited upon by an earthly mother! For The Wonderful, The Mighty God to stoop thus, is humility profound!   
So spoke the young Believer and I liked his speech very much, for I saw in him how faith could work by love and how the end of controversy and argument is reached at Bethlehem, for without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.   
V. Now I will go to Bethlehem with AN ADVANCED CHRISTIAN, such an one as Paul the Aged, or John the Divineno, rather with such an one as I might find among the circle of my own Church members!   
Calm, peaceful, kind and gracious, he seems as if his training in the school of Christ and the sacred anointing of the Holy Spirit have made him like a child, himselfhis character is ripening and his fitness for the Kingdom of Heaven is becoming more apparent. Tears glistened in the old mans eyes as he looked with expressive fondness on that Infant of Eternal Days. He spoke not much and what he said was not exactly like what any of my other companions had spoken. It was his manner to quote short sentences, with great exactness, from the Word of God. He uttered them slowly, pondered them deeply and there was much spiritual unction in the accent with which he spoke. I will just mention a few of the profitable sentences that he uttered. First he said, No man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven. He really appeared to see more in that passage than I had ever seen there. Jesus, the Son of Man, in Heaven even while He was on earth! Then he looked at the Child and said, The same was in the beginning with God. After that, he uttered these three short sentences in succession, In the beginning was the Wordall things were made by Himand the Word was made flesh. He looked as if he realized what a great mystery it was that our Lord Jesus first made all things and afterwards was Himself made flesh. Then he reverently bent his knee, clasped his hands and exclaimed, My Fathers giftBehold, what manner of love!   
As we retire from that manger and stable, that aged Christian puts his hand on my shoulder and says, Young man, I have often been to Bethlehem. It was a much-loved haunt of mine before you were born. And there is one sweet lesson I have learned there which I should like to pass on to you. The Infinite became finite. The Almighty consented to become weak. He that upheld all things by the word of His power, willingly became helpless. He that spoke all worlds into existence, resigned for a while even the power of speech! In all these things, He fulfilled the will of His Father, so be not you afraid, nor surprised with any amazement if you should be dealt with in like manner, for His Father is also your Father. You who have reveled in the ancient settlements of the Everlasting Covenant, may yet have to hang feebly on the mercies of the hour. You have leaned on your Saviors breast at His Table, but you may presently be so weak that you must rely on the nursing of a woman. Your tongue has been touched as with a coal from the heavenly altar, but your lips may yet be sealed as are those of an infant. If you should sink still deeper in humiliation, you will never reach the depth to which Jesus descended in this one act of His condescension. True, true, I replied, my young Brother hinted at the wondrous condescension of the Son of God. You have explained it to me more fully.   
Thus, Beloved, I have endeavored to carry out my purpose of going to Bethlehem with five separate companionsall representative persons. Alas that some of you are not represented by any one of these characters! Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Care you not for this blessed Nativity which marked of old, the fullness of time? If you die without a knowledge of this Mystery, your lives will indeed be a fearful blank and your eternal portion will be truly terrible!   
VI. Give me your earnest attention a little longer while I try to change the line of meditation. It may please God that while I attempt to CONDUCT A WHOLE FAMILY TO BETHLEHEM, some hearts which have thus far resisted all my appeals may yet yield to the Lord Jesus Christ!   
A familiar picture will serve my purpose. Imagine this to be Christmas Eve and that a Christian father has all his household gathered with him around the fire. Desirous of blending instruction with pleasure, he proposes that the birth of Christ shall be the subject of their conversationthat every one of the children shall say something about it and he will preach them a short sermon on each of their remarks. He calls Mary, their servant, into the room. And when all are comfortably seated they commence.   
1. After a simple sketch of the facts, the father turns to his youngest boy and asks, What have you to say, Willy? The little fellow, who is just old enough to go to the Sunday school, repeats two lines that he has learned to sing theremany of you, no doubt, know them *Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior,   
Once became a Child like me.*

Good, my dear, says the fatheronce became a child like me. Yes. Jesus was born into the world as other little babies are born. He was as little, as delicate, as weak as other infants and needed to be nursed as they do

*Almighty God became a Man,   
A Baby like others seen   
As small in size, and weak of frame,   
As babies have always been.   
From thence He grew an Infant mild,   
By fair and due degrees   
And then became a bigger Child,   
And sat on Marys knee.   
At first held up for need of strength,   
In time alone He ran.   
Then grew a Boy. A Ladat length   
A Youthat last, a Man.*

It is wrong to draw pictures of the little Jesus and then say that they are like Him. Wicked idolaters do that. But we ought to think of Jesus Christ as made in all things like unto His brethren. There was never a thing in which He was not like us, except that He had no sin. He used to eat, drink, sleep, wake, laugh, cry and hold onto His mother, just as other children do. So it is quite right for you, Willy, to say, once became a Child like me.

2. Now, John, said the father, addressing a lad rather older, what have you to say? Well, father, said John, if Jesus Christ was like us in some things, I do not think He could have had so many comforts as we havenot such a nice nursery, nor such a snug bed. Was He not disturbed by the horses, and cows, and camels? It seems to me shocking that He had to live in a stable.

That is a very proper remark, John, said his father. We ought all of us to think how our blessed Lord cast in His lot with the poor. When those Wise Men came from the East, I daresay they were surprised, at first, to find that Jesus was a poor mans Child. Yet they fell down and worshipped Him, they opened their treasury and presented to Him very costly giftsgold, and frankincense, and myrrh. Ah, when the Son of God made that great stoop from Heaven to earth, He passed the glittering palaces of kings and the marble halls of the rich and the nobleto take up His abode in the lodgings of poverty. Still, He was born King of the Jews. Now, John, did you ever read of a child being born a king before? Of course you never didchildren have been born princes and heirs to a thronebut no other than Jesus was ever born a King. The poverty of our Saviors circumstances is like a foil which sets off the glorious dignity of His Person. You have read of good kings, such as David, Hezekiah and Josiah, yet, if they had not been kings, we would never have heard of them. But it was quite otherwise with Jesus Christ. He was possessed of more true greatness in a stable than any other king ever possessed in a palace! But do not imagine it was only in His Childhood that Jesus was the Kinsman of the poor. When He grew up to be a Man, He said, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. Do you know, my children, that our comforts were purchased at the expense of His sufferings? He became poor that we, through His poverty, might be rich. We ought, therefore, to thank and praise the blessed Jesus every time we remember how much worse off He was in this world than we are.

3. It is your turn now, said the father, as he looked at his little daughteran intelligent girl who was just beginning to be of some assistance to her mother in the discharge of her daily domestic duties. Poor girl, she modestly hung down her head, for she remembered, just then, how frequently little acts of carelessness had exposed her to tender but faithful rebukes from her parents. At last she said, Oh, Father, how good Jesus Christ was! He never did anything wrong. Very true, my Love, the father replied. It is a sweet subject for meditation that you suggest. His Nature was sinless, His thoughts were pure, His heart was transparent and all His actions just and right. You have read of the lambs which Moses, in the Law, commanded the Jews to offer in sacrifice to God. They were all to be without spot or blemishand if there had been one taint of impurity in the Child that was born of Mary, He could never have been our Savior. Sometimes we think naughty thoughts and nobody knows it but God. And, sometimes, we do what is evil, but we are not found out. It was not so with the meek and lowly SaviorHe never had even one fault! His delight was in the Law of the Lord and in that Law did He meditate day and night. Even when we do not commit any positive sin, we often forget to do our duty, but Jesus never did. He was like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season. He never disappointed any hopes that were set upon Him.

There now, said the father, we have already had three beautiful thoughtsJesus Christ took our Nature, He condescended to be very poor and He was without sin.

4. There was, in the room, a big boy who had just come home from boarding school to spend his Christmas holidays, so his father turned to this son and said, Fred, we must hear your remark next. Very short, very significant was Master Freds responsethat Child had a wonderful mind.

Indeed He had, said the father, and it would be well for all of us if that mind were in us which was also in Christ Jesus. His mind was Infinite, for He took part in the eternal counsels of God. But I would rather suggest to you another line of thoughtIn Him was Light. The mind of Jesus was like light for its clearness and purity. We often see things through a misleading medium. We form wrong impressions which we find it trouble enough afterwards to correct. But Jesus was of quick understanding to discern between good and evil. His mind was never warped by prejudice. He saw things just as they are. Never had He to borrow other peoples eyesand the ideas hatched in other peoples brains never guided His judgment. He had light in Himself and that light was the life of men, so capable was He of always instructing the ignorant and guiding their feet in the paths of peace. His heart was likewise pure and that has more to do with the development of the mind and the improvement of the understanding than we are apt to suppose. No corrupt imagination ever tarnished the brightness of His vision. He was always in harmony with God and always felt good-will toward man. You might well say, Fred, that He had a wonderful mind.

5. The children having each made some observation, the father next addressed Mary, the servant. Do not be timid, he said, but speak out and let us know your thoughts. I was just a-thinking, Sir, said Mary, how humble it was of Him to take upon Himself the form of a Servant. Right, Mary, quite right. And it is always profitable to consider how Jesus came down to our low estate. We may well be reconciled to any lot which Jesus voluntarily chose for Himself. But there is more in your remark, as applicable to Bethlehem and the Nativity, than you perhaps imagined, for, according to Dr. Kittos account of the inn, or Caravanserai, it was the servants place that the holy family occupied. Imagine now a square pile of strong and lofty walls, built of brick upon a basement of stone with one great archway entrance. These walls enclose a large open area with a well in the middle. In the center is an inner quadrangle consisting of a raised platform on all four sides covered with a kind of piazza. And then, in the wall behind, there are small doors leading to the little cells which form the lodgings. Such we may suppose to have been the inn in which there was no room for Mary and Joseph. Now for a description of the stable. It is formed of a covered avenue between the back wall of the lodging apartments and the outer wall of the whole building thus it is on a level with the court and three or four feet below the raised platform. The side walls of those cells, in the inner quadrangle, projecting behind into the courtyard, form recesses, or stalls, which servants and muleteers used for shelter in bad weather. Joseph and Mary seem to have found a retreat in one of these. There, it is supposed, the Infant Jesus was born. And if it is so, how literally true is it that He took on Him the form of a Servant and occupied the servants apartment!

6. Once more the father seeks a fresh text and, looking at his wife, he says, My Dear, you have taken a quiet interest in our conversations this evening. Let us now hear your reflection. I am sure you can say something we shall all be pleased to hear. The mother looked absorbed in thought. She appeared to have a vivid picture of the whole scene before her and her eyes kindled as if she could actually see the little Darling lying in the manger. She spoke most naturally and most maternally, too. What a lovely Child! And yet, she added with a deep sigh, He who is thus fairer than the children of men in His cradle, after a few short years was so overwhelmed with anxiety, suffering and anguish, that His visage was more marred than that of any other man! And His form more than that of the sons of men.

A pensive sadness stole over every countenance as that godly mother offered her reflections. Womans tenderness seemed to be sanctified by Divine Grace in her heart and to give forth its richest fragrance. The father presently broke the stillness as he said, Ah, my Love, you have spoken best of all! His heart was broken with reproach! That humble birth was but the prelude to a life still more humble and a death even more abased! Your feelings, my Love, are most precious evidence of your close relationship to Him

*A faithful friend of grief partakes;   
But union can be none   
Betwixt a heart that melts like wax   
And hearts as hard as stone.   
Betwixt a head diffusing blood   
And members sound and whole,   
Betwixt an agonizing God   
And an unfeeling soul.*

7. To close up now, said the father, glancing round with animated expression upon his household, I suppose you will expect a few words from me. Much as I like your mothers observations, I think it would be hardly right, on such an auspicious day, to finish with anything melancholy and sad. You know that fathers are generally most thoughtful about the prospects of their children. I can look at you boys and think, Never mind if you have a few hardships so long as you can struggle successfully against them. Well now, I have been picturing to myself the manger, the Baby that lay in it, and Mary, His mother watching lovingly over Him. And Ill tell you what I thought. Those little hands will one day grasp the scepter of universal empire! Those little arms will one day grapple with the monster, Death, and destroy it! Those little feet shall tread on the serpents neck and crush that old deceivers head! Yes, and that little tongue which has not yet learned to articulate a word shall, before long, pour from His sweet lips such streams of eloquence as shall fertilize the minds of the whole human race and infuse His teaching into the literature of the world! And again, a little while, and that tongue shall pronounce the judgments of Heaven on the destinies of all mankind!

We have all thought it wonderful that the God of Glory should stoop so low, but we shall one day think it more wonderful that the Man of Sorrows should be exalted so high! Earth could find no place too base for HimHeaven will scarcely find a place lofty enough for Him! If there is just this one thing to be said about Jesus Christ, He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. We may change with circumstancesJesus never did and never will! When we look at Him in the manger, we may say, He is The Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God. And when we see Him exalted to His Fathers right hand, we may exclaim, Behold the

Man! *His human heart He still retains   
Though enthroned in highest bliss   
And feels each tempted members pains,   
For our afflictions His.*

So closed the series of observations by the various members of a Christian family around the Christmas fire. The father said it was time to retire. And he bade them all, good night. And as the father said, so say I, Good night and God bless you all! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LUKE 2:1-19.**  
[Remember, the Exposition was before the sermon.]

We will now read the story of our Saviors birth as it is recorded in the Gospel according to Luke.  
Verses 1-6. And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria). And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the City of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. Little did any idea enter into Caesars head that he was accomplishing the purpose of God by bringing Mary to Bethlehem at that particular time so that her Child might be born there! But God can accomplish the purpose of His Providence and of His Grace in any way that He pleases! And although Caesar is not aware of all that is involved in his action, his decree which he intends to simply be a means of registering his subjects and of filling his coffers, is to be overruled by God for the fulfillment of the prophecy uttered centuries before the event happenedthat Christ must be born at Bethlehem! It may seem to some of you a strange thing that there should be an imperial edict issued from Rome which should have an important influence upon the place of birth of the Child, yet I do not doubt that in Gods esteem, the whole of the great Roman Empire was of very small account in comparison with His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! And today the thrones and dominions of the mightiest monarchs are only like the small cogs of the wheels of Divine Providence where the welfare of even the least of the Lords people is concerned. He reckons not events according to their apparent importancethe standard of the sanctuary is a very different measure from that which worldlings use. When any purpose of God is to be accomplished, all other things will be subordinated to it!   
6, 7. And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. Now has heavenly Glory wedded earthly poverty and, henceforth, let no man dare to despise the poor and needy since the Son of the Highest is born in a stable and cradled in a manger! How low the King of Glory stoops, and how gloriously He lifts up the lowly to share His Glory!   
8, 9. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the Glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sorely afraid. For such is the condition, even of gracious souls, that the near approach of the Divine Glory begets in them trembling and alarm! Oh, how wondrously changed shall we be when we are able to bear even the glories of Heaven! Have you ever thought of this, dear Friends? The beloved Apostle John saw Christ in His Glory and he wrote, When I saw Him, I fell at His feet, as dead. And these shepherds, even at the sight of the angel of the Lord, were sorely afraid. You and I, Beloved, must undergo a marvelous change before we shall be able to be at Home with God in His Glorybut that change shall, through His abundant Grace, take place before long!   
10-12. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; You shall find the Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. This shall be a sign unto you, said the angel to the shepherdsand this is the ensign of the Christ of God even unto this day. There are some who are constantly bringing discredit upon religion by their pompous ritual and gorgeous ceremonies buried beneath the weight of their sensuous worship! But the living Christ is still found in simple, lowly guise, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.   
13. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host. They had heard the heavenly heralds proclamation and hurried down to join him in publishing the glad tidings! They could not bear that only one angel should announce the birth of the Christ, so, suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.   
13-19. Praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into Heaven, the shepherds said, one to another, Let us now go to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Baby lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. Mary laid these things up in store and pondered them, giving them their due weight and value. Oh, that we did the same with every Truth of God that we learn!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.  
END OF VOLUME 50 Sermon #666 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

HOLY WORK FOR CHRISTMAS

NO. 666

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 24, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.   
Luke 2:17-20.**

EVERY season has its own proper fruitapples for autumn, holly berries for Christmas. The earth brings forth according to the period of the year and with man there is a time for every purpose under Heaven. At this season the world is engaged in congratulating itself and in expressing its complimentary wishes for the good of its citizens. Let me suggest extra and more solid work for Christians. As we think, today, of the birth of the Savior, let us aspire after a fresh birth of the Savior in our heartsthat as He is already formed in us the hope of glory, we may be renewed in the spirit of our mindsthat we may go again to the Bethlehem of our spiritual nativity and do our first works, enjoy our first loves and feast with Jesus as we did in the holy, happy, heavenly days of our espousals.

Let us go to Jesus with something of that youthful freshness and excessive delight which was so manifest in us when we looked to Him at first. Let Him be crowned anew by us, for He is still adorned with the dew of His youth and remains the same yesterday, today and forever. The citizens of Durham, though they dwell not far from the Scotch border, and consequently in the olden times were frequently liable to be attacked, were exempted from the toils of war because there was a cathedral within their walls and they were set aside to the bishops service, being called in the olden times by the name of holy work-folk.

Now, we citizens of the New Jerusalem, having the Lord Jesus in our midst, may well excuse ourselves from the ordinary ways of celebrating this season. And considering ourselves to be holy work-folk, we may keep it, after a different sort from other men, in holy contemplation and in blessed service of that gracious God whose unspeakable gift the new-born King is to us.

I selected this text this morning because it seemed to indicate to me four ways of serving God, four methods of executing holy work and exercising Christian thought. Each of the verses sets before us a different way of sacred service. Some, it appears, published abroad the news, told to others what they had seen and heard. Some wondered with a holy marveling and astonishment. One, at least, according to the third verse, pondered, meditated, thought upon these things. And others, in the fourth place, glorified God and gave Him praise. I know not which of these four did God the best service, but I think if we could combine all these mental emotions and outward exercises we should be sure to praise God after a most godly and acceptable fashion.

I. To begin then, in the first place, we find that some celebrated the Saviors birth by PUBLISHING ABROAD what they had heard and seen. And truly we may say of them that they had something to rehearse in mens ears well worth the telling! That for which Prophets and kings had waited long had at last arrived and arrived to them! They had found out the answer to the perpetual riddle. They might have run through the streets with the ancient philosopher, crying, Eureka! Eureka! for their discovery was far superior to his.

They had found out no solution to a mechanical problem or metaphysical dilemma. Their discovery was second to none ever made by men in real value, since it has been like the leaves of the Tree of Life to heal the nations and a river of Water of Life to make glad the city of God! They had seen angels! They had heard them sing a song all strange and new. They had seen more than angelsthey had beheld the angels King, the Angel of the Covenant whom we delight in! They had heard the music of Heaven, and when near that manger, the ear of their faith had heard the music of earths hope, a mystic harmony which should ring all down the agesthe sweet melody of hearts attuned to praise the Lord and the glorious swell of the holy joy of God and man rejoicing in glad accord.

They had seen God Incarnatesuch a sight that he who gazes on it must feel his tongue unloosedunless, indeed, an unspeakable astonishment should make him dumb! Be silent when their eyes had seen such a vision? Impossible! To the first person they met outside that lowly stable door they began to tell their matchless tale and they wearied not till nightfall, crying, Come and worship! Come and worship Christ, the new-born King! As for us, Beloved, have we also not something to relate which demands utterance? If we talk of Jesus, who can blame us? This, indeed, might make the tongue of him that sleeps to movethe mystery of God Incarnate, for our sake bleeding and dyingthat we might neither bleed nor die! God Incarnate descending that we might ascend! Wrapped in swaddling cloths that we might be unwrapped of the grave clothes of corruption!

Here is such a story, so profitable to all hearers that he who repeats it the most often does best, and he who speaks the least has most reason to accuse himself for sinful silence. They had something to tell and that something had in it the inimitable blending which is the secret sign and royal march of Divine authorshipa peerless marrying of sublimity and simplicity! Angels singingsinging to shepherds! Heaven bright with glory! Bright at midnight! God! A Babe!! The Infinite! An Infant of a span long!! The Ancient of Days! Born of a woman!! What more simple than the inn, the manger, a carpenter, a carpenters wife, a child?

What more sublime than a multitude of the heavenly host waking the midnight with their joyous song and God Himself in human flesh made manifest? A child is but an ordinary sightbut what a marvel to see that Word which was in the beginning with God, tabernacling among us that we might behold His Glorythe Glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth? Brethren, we have a tale to tell, as simple as sublime. What simpler?Believe and live. What more sublime? Was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself! A system of salvation so wonderful that angelic minds cannot but adore as they meditate upon it. And yet so simple that the children in the temple may fitly hymn its virtues as they sing. Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.

What a splendid combining of the sublime and the simple have we in the great Atonement offered by the Incarnate Savior! Oh make known to all men this saving Truth of God! The shepherds need no excuse for making everywhere the announcement of the Saviors birth, for what they told they first received from Heaven! Their news was not muttered in their ears by Sybilline oracles, nor brought to light by philosophic research. It was not conceived in poetry nor found as treasure trove among the volumes of the ancient. It was revealed to them by that notable Gospel preacher who led the angelic host and testified, Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

When Heaven entrusts a man with a merciful Revelation, he is bound to deliver the good tidings to others. What? Keep that a secret whose utterance Eternal Mercy makes to charm the midnight air? To what purpose were angels sent if the message were not to be spread abroad? According to the teaching of our own beloved Lord we must not be silent, for He bids us, What you hear in secret, that reveal you in public. And what I tell you in the ear in closets, that proclaim you upon the housetops. Beloved, you have heard a voice from Heavenyou twice-born men, begotten again unto a lively hopeyou have heard the Spirit of God bearing witness of Gods Truth with you and teaching you of heavenly things. You, then, must keep this Christmas by telling to your fellow men what Gods own holy Spirit has seen fit to reveal to you!

But though the shepherds told what they heard from Heaven, remember that they spoke of what they had seen below. They had, by observation, made those Truths of God most surely their own which had first been spoken to them by Revelation. No man can speak of the things of God with any success until the doctrine which he finds in the Bible, he finds, also, in his heart. We must bring down the mystery and make it plain by knowing, and by the teaching of the Holy Spirit its practical power on the heart and conscience. My Brethren, the Gospel which we preach is most surely revealed to us by the Lord. But, moreover, our hearts have tried and proved, have grasped, have felt, have realized its truth and power!

If we have not been able to understand its heights and depths, yet we have felt its mystic power upon our heart and spirit. It has revealed sin to us plainly. It has revealed to us our pardon. It has killed the reigning power of sin. It has given us Christ to reign over us and the Holy Spirit to dwell within our bodies as in a temple. Now we must speak! I do not urge any of you to speak of Jesus who merely know the Word as you find it in the Bibleyour teaching can have but little power. But I do speak earnestly to you who know its mighty influence upon the heart, who have not only heard of the Babe but have seen Him in the manger.

I speak to those who have taken Him up in your arms and received Him as being born to you, a Savior to youChrist the AnointedJesus, the Savior from sin, for you. Beloved, can you do otherwise than speak of the things which you have seen and heard? God has made you to taste and to handle of this good Word of Life and you must not, you dare not hold your peace! You must tell friends and neighbors what you have felt within.

These were shepherds, unlettered men. I will warrant you they could not read in a book. There is no probability that they even knew a single letter. They were shepherds, but they preached right well. And, my Brethren, whatever some may think, preaching is not to be confined to those learned gentlemen who have taken their degrees at Oxford or at Cambridge, or at any college or university. It is true that learning need not be an impediment to Grace and may be a fitting weapon in a gracious hand. But often the Grace of God has glorified itself by the plain clear way in which unlettered men have understood the Gospel and have proclaimed

it. I would not mind asking the whole world to find a Master of Arts now

living who has brought more souls to Christ Jesus than Richard Weaver. If the whole bench of bishops have done a tenth as much in the way of soul-winning as that one man, it is more than most of us give them credit for. Let us give to our God all the Glory, but still let us not deny the fact that this sinner saved, with the brogue of the coal miner still about him, fresh from the coal pit, tells the story of the Cross, by Gods Grace, in such a way that Right Reverend Fathers in God might humbly sit at his feet to learn the way to reach the heart and melt the stubborn soul!

It is true an uneducated Brother is not fitted for all workhe has his own spherebut he is quite able to tell of what he has seen and heard. And so it strikes me, is every man in a measure. If you have seen Jesus and heard His saving voice. If you have received Truth as from the Lord. If you have felt its tremendous power as coming from God to you, and if you have experienced its might upon your own spiritwhy you can surely tell out what God has written within! If you cannot get beyond that into the deeper mysteries, into the more knotty points, well, well, there are some who can, and so you need not be uneasy. But you can at least reveal the first and foundational Truths and they are by far the most important!

If you cannot speak in the pulpit. If as yet your cheek would mantle with a blush and your tongue would refuse to do her office in the presence of many, there are your children! You are not ashamed to speak before them! There is the little cluster round the hearth on Christmas night. There is the little congregation in the workshop. There is a little audience somewhere to whom you might tell out of Jesus love to lost ones. Do not get beyond what you know. Do not plunge into what you have not experiencedfor if you do, you will be out of your depthand then very soon you will be floundering and making confusion worse confounded. Go as far as you know. And since you know yourself to be a sinnerand Jesus a Savior, and a great one, tootalk about those two matters and good will come of it! Beloved, each one, in his own position, tell what you have heard and seen! Publish that abroad among the sons of men. But were the shepherds authorized? It is a great thing to be authorized! Unauthorized ministers are most shameful intruders! Unordained men who are not in the Apostolic succession entering the pulpitvery horriblevery horrible indeed! The Puseyite mind utterly fails to fathom the depth of horror which is contained in the idea of an unauthorized man preaching and a man out of the Apostolic succession daring to teach the way of salvation! To me this horror seems very much like a schoolboys fright at a hobgoblin which his fears had conjured up. I think if I saw a man slip through the ice into a cold grave and I could rescue him from drowning it would not be so very horrible to me to be the means of saving him, though I may not be employed by the Royal Humane Society.

I imagine if I saw a fire and heard a poor woman scream at an upper window and likely to be burned alive, if I should wheel the fire escape up to the window and preserve her life, it would not be so very dreadful a matter though I might not belong to the regular Fire Brigade. If a company of brave volunteers should chase an enemy out of their own county, I do not know that it would be anything so shocking although a whole army of mercenaries might be neglecting their work in obedience to some venerable military rubric which rendered them incapable of effective service. But mark you, the shepherds and others like them are in the Apostolic succession and they are authorized by Divine ordinancefor every man who hears the Gospel is authorized to tell it to others.

Do you want authority? Here it is in strong confirmation from Holy WritLet him that hears say, Comethat is, let every man who truly hears the Gospel bid others come to drink of the Water of Life. This is all the warrant you require for preaching the Gospel according to your ability. It is not every man who has ability to preach the Word. And it is not every man that we should like to hear preach it in the great congregation, for if all were mouth, what a great vacuum the Church would be! Yet every Christian in some method should deliver the glad tidings. Our wise God takes care that liberty of prophesying shall not run to riot, for He does not give efficient pastoral and ministerial gifts to every many. Yet every man, according to his gifts, let him minister! Every one of you, though not in the pulpit, yet in the pew, in the workshopsomewhere, anywhere, everywheremake known the savor of the Lord Jesus. And let this be your authorityLet him that hears, say, Come.

I never thought of asking any authority for crying, Fire! When I saw a house burning, I never dreamed of seeking any authority for doing my best to rescue a poor perishing fellow man. Nor do I mean to seek it now! All the authority you want, any of you, is not the authority which can stream from prelates decorated with long sleevesbut the authority which comes directly from the great Head of the Church who gives authority to every one of those who hear the Gospel to teach every man, his fellow, saying, Know the Lord. Here, dear Brethren, is one way for you to keep a right holy, and in some sense, a right merry Christmas!

Imitate these humble men, of whom it is said, When they had seen it they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child.

II. We set before you, now, another mode of keeping Christmas by HOLY WONDER, ADMIRATION, AND ADORATION. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. We shall have little to say of those persons who merely wondered and did nothing more. Many are set a wondering by the Gospel. They are content to hear it, pleased to hear itthough not, to them, in itself something newyet there are new ways of putting it and they are glad to be refreshed with the variety. The preachers voice is to them as the sound of one that gives a goodly tune upon an instrument. They are glad to listen.

They are not skeptics. They do not cavil. They raise no difficulties. They just say to themselves, It is an excellent Gospel. It is a wonderful plan of salvation. Here is most astonishing love, most extraordinary condescension. Sometimes they marvel that these things should be told them by shepherds. They can hardly understand how unlearned and ignorant men should speak of these things! And they marvel how such things should ever get into these shepherds headswhere they learned them, how it is that they seem so earnest about themwhat kind of operation they must have passed through to be able to speak as they do!

But after holding up their hands and opening their mouths for about nine days, the wonder subsides and they go their way and think no more about it. There are many of you who are set to wondering whenever you see a work of God in your district. You hear of somebody converted who was a very extraordinary sinner and you say, It is very wonderful! There is a revival. You happen to be present at one of the meetings when the Spirit of God is working gloriouslyyou say, Well, this is a singular thing! Very astonishing! Even the newspapers can afford a corner, at times, for very great and extraordinary works of God the Holy Spirit! But then all emotion endsit is all wondering and nothing more.

Now, I trust it will not be so with any of usthat we shall not think of the Savior and of the doctrines of the Gospel which He came to preach simply with amazement and astonishmentfor this will work us but little good. On the other hand, there is another mode of wondering which is akin to adoration, if it is not adoration, itself. I think it would be very difficult to draw a line between holy wonder and real worship. When the soul is overwhelmed with the majesty of Gods Glory, though it may not express itself in song, or even utter its voice with bowed head in humble prayer, yet it silently adores.

I am inclined to think that the astonishment which sometimes seizes upon the human intellect at the remembrance of Gods greatness and goodness is, perhaps, the purest form of adoration which ever rises from mortal men to the Throne of the Most High. This kind of wonder I recommend to those of you who, from the quietness and solitariness of your lives, are scarcely able to imitate the shepherds in telling out the tale to othersyou can at least fill up the circle of the worshippers before the Throne by wondering at what God has done! Let me suggest to you that holy wonder at what God has done should be very natural to you. That God should consider His fallen creature, manand instead of sweeping him away with the besom of destructionshould devise a wonderful scheme for his redemption and that He should, Himself, undertake to be mans Redeemer and to pay his ransom price, is, indeed, marvelous!

Probably it is most marvelous to you in its relation to yourself, that you should be redeemed by blood! That God should forsake the thrones and royalties above to suffer ignominiously below for you! If you know yourself you can never see any adequate motive or reason in your own flesh for such a deed as this. Why such love to me? you will say. What should you and I say, if David, sitting in his house, could only say, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that You have brought me up to now?

Had we been the most meritorious of individuals and had unceasingly kept the Lords commands we could not have deserved such a priceless gift as Incarnation! But, Sinners, offenders who revolted and went from God further and further, what shall we say of this Incarnate God dying for us? Herein is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us. Let your soul lose itself in wonder, for wonder, dear Friends, is in this way a very practical emotion! Holy wonder will lead you to grateful worship! Being astonished at what God has done, you will pour out your soul with astonishment at the foot of the golden Throne with the song, Blessing and honor and glory and majesty and power and dominion and might be unto Him who sits on the Throne and does these great things for me.

Filled with this wonder it will cause you a godly watchfulness. You will be afraid to sin against such love as this! Feeling the Presence of the mighty God in the gift of His dear Son, you will take off your shoes because the place where you stand is holy ground. You will be moved at the same time to a glorious hope! If Jesus has given Himself to you. If He has done this marvelous thing on your behalf, you will feel that Heaven itself is not too great for your expectation and that the rivers of pleasure at Gods right hand are not too sweet or too deep for you to drink! Who can be astonished at anything when he has once been astonished at the Manger and the Cross?

What is there wonderful left after one has seen the Savior? The nine wonders of the world? Why, you may put them all into a nutcracker and a childs art can excel them all! This one wonder is not the wonder of earth only, but of Heaven and earth and even Hell itself! It is not the wonder of the olden time, but the wonder of ALL time and the wonder of eternity. They who see human wonders a few times finally cease to be astonished. The noblest pile that architect ever raised finally fails to impress the onlookerbut not so this marvelous temple of Incarnate Deity! The more we look the more we are astonished! The more we become accustomed to it, the more we have a sense of its surpassing splendor of love and Grace!

There is more of God, let us say, to be seen in the Manger and the Cross, than in the sparkling stars above, the rolling deep below, the towering mountain, the teeming valleys, the abodes of life, or the abyss of death! Let us, then, spend some choice hours of this festive season in holy wondersuch as will produce gratitude, worship, love and confidence.

III. A third manner of holy work, namely, HER HEART PONDERING AND PRESERVING, you will find in the next verse. One at least and let us hope there were others, or at any rate let us ourselves be the othersone kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. She wonderedshe did moreshe pondered. You will observe there was an exercise on the part of this blessed woman of the three great parts of her beingher memoryshe kept all these things. Her affectionsshe kept them in her heart. Her intellectshe pondered them, considered them, weighed them, turned them overso that memory, affection and understanding were all exercised about these things.

We delight to see this in Mary, but we are not at all surprised when we recollect that she was, in some sense, the most concerned of all on earthfor it was of her that Jesus Christ had been born. Those who come nearest to Jesus and enter the most closely into fellowship with Him will be sure to be the most engrossed with Him. Certain persons are best esteemed at a distance, but not the Savior! When you shall have known Him to the very fullest, then shall you love Him with the love which passes knowledge. You shall comprehend the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of His love. And when you shall do so, then your own love shall swell beyond all length and breadth, all height and depth.

The birth most concerned Mary and therefore she was the most impressed with it. Note the way in which her concern was shownshe was a woman and the Divine Grace which shines best in the female is not boldnessthat belongs to the masculine mind. Affectionate modesty is a feminine beauty, and from now we do not read so much of her telling abroad as pondering within. No doubt she had her circle and her word to speak in it, but for the most part she, like another Mary, sat still in the house. She worked, but her work was most directly for Him, her hearts joy and delight.

Like other children, the holy Child needed care, which only a mothers hand and heart could exercise. She was, therefore, engrossed with Him. O blessed engrossment! Sweet engagement! Count not that to be unacceptable service which occupies itself rather with Jesus than with His disciples or His wandering sheep. That woman who broke the alabaster box and poured the ointment upon our Jesus Himself was faulted by Judas. And even the rest of the disciples thought that the poor had lost a benefit, but she has worked a good work on Me was the Saviors answer. I desire to bring you to this thoughtif during this season you retiring, quiet ones, cannot speak to others, or have no desirable opportunity or suitable gift for that workyou may sit still with Jesus and honor Him in peace.

Mary took the Lord in her arms. Oh that you may bear Him in yours! She executed works directly for His Personimitate her! You can love Him, bless Him, praise Him, study Him, ponder Him, comprehend His Character, study the types that set Him forth and imitate His life! And in this way, though your worship will not blaze forth among the sons of men and scarcely benefit them as some other forms of work, yet it will both benefit you and be acceptable to your Lord. Beloved, remember what you have heard of Christ and what He has done for you! Make your heart the golden cup to hold the rich remembrances of His past loving-kindness! Make it a pot of manna to preserve the heavenly bread on which saints have fed in days gone by!

Let your memory treasure up everything about Christ which you have either heard, or felt, or known! And then let your fond affections hold Him fast forevermore. Love Him! Pour out that alabaster box of your heart, and let all the precious ointment of your affections come streaming on His feet. If you cannot do it with joy, do it sorrowfully! Wash His feet with tears, wipe them with the hairs of your headbut do love Himlove the blessed Son of God, your ever tender Friend. Let your intellect be exercised concerning the Lord Jesus. Turn over and over by meditation what you read. Do not be loiter mendo not stop at the surfacedive into the depths!

Be not as the swallow which touches the brook with her wing, but as the fish which penetrates the lowest wave. Drink deep draughts of love! Do not sip and awaybut dwell at the well as Isaac did at the well Lahairoi. Abide with your Lordlet Him not be to you as a wayfaring man that tarries for a night, but constrain Him, saying, Abide with us, for the day is far spent. Hold Him and do not let Him go! The word ponder, as you know, means to weigh. Make ready the scales of judgment. Oh, but where are the scales that can weigh the Lord Christ? He takes up the isles as a very little thingwho shall take Him up? He weighs the mountains in scales. In what scales shall we weigh Him?

Be it so, if your understanding cannot comprehend, let your affections apprehend. And if your spirit cannot compass the Lord Jesus in the arms of its understanding, let it embrace Him in the arms of your affection. Oh, Beloved, here is blessed Christmas work for you, if, like Mary, you lay up all these things in your heart and ponder upon them!

IV. The last piece of holy Christmas work is to come. The shepherds returned, we read in the twentieth verse, GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. Returned to what? Returned to business to look after the lambs and sheep again! Then if we desire to glorify God we need not give up our business. Some people get the notion into their heads that the only way in which they can live for God is by becoming ministers, missionaries, or Bible women.

Alas, how many of us would be shut out from any opportunity of magnifying the Most High if this were the case? The shepherds went back to the sheep pens glorifying and praising God! Beloved, it is not office, it is earnestness! It is not position, it is Divine Grace which will enable us to glorify God! God is most surely glorified in that cobblers stall where the godly worker, as he plies the awl, sings of the Saviors love1 Yes, glorified far more than in many a cathedral where official religiousness performs its scanty duties.

The name of Jesus is glorified by yonder carter as he drives his horse and blesses his God, or speaks to his fellow laborer by the roadside as much as by yonder Divine who, throughout the country like Boanerges, is thundering out the Gospel! God is glorified by our abiding in our vocation. Take care you do not fall out of the path of duty by leaving your calling, and take care you do not dishonor your profession while in it! Think not much of yourselves, but do not think too little of your callings. There is no trade which is not sanctified by the Gospel. If you turn to the Bible, you will find the most menial forms of labor have been in some way or other connected either with the most daring deeds of faith, or else with persons whose lives have been otherwise illustrious.

Keep to your calling, Brother, keep to your calling! Whatever God has made you, when He calls you, abide in that, unless you are quite sure mind thatunless you are quite sure that He calls you to something else. The shepherds glorified God though they went to their trade. They glorified God though they were shepherds. As we remarked, they were not men of learning. So far from having an extensive library full of books, it is probable they could not read a word. Yet they glorified God. This takes away all excuse for you good people who say, I am no scholar. I never had any education. I never went even to a Sunday school. Ah, but if your heart is right, you can glorify God!

Never mind, Sarah. Do not be cast down because you know so little. Learn more if you can, but make good use of what you do know. Never mind, John! It is, indeed, a pity that you should have had to toil so early, as not to have acquired even the rudiments of knowledgebut do not think that you cannot glorify God! If you would praise God, live a holy life! You can do that by His Grace, at any rate, without scholarship. If you would do good to others, be good yourself. And that is a way which is as open to the most illiterate as it is to the best taught! Be of good courage! Shepherds glorified God and so may you!

Remember there is one thing in which they had a preference over the wise men. The wise men wanted a star to lead them. The shepherds did not. The wise men went wrong even with a starthey stumbled into Jerusalem. The shepherds went straight away to Bethlehem. Simple minds sometimes find a glorified Christ where learned heads, much puzzled with their lore, miss Him. A good doctor used to say, Lo, these simpletons have entered into the kingdom, while we learned men have been fumbling for the latch. It is often so. And so, you simple minds, be comforted and glad!

The way in which these shepherds honored God is worth noticing. They did it by praising Him. Let us think more of sacred song than we sometimes do. When the song is bursting in full chorus from the thousands in this house, it is but a noise in the ear of some menbut inasmuch as many true hearts, touched with the love of Jesus, are keeping pace with their tonguesit is not a mere noise in Gods esteem! There is a sweet music in it that makes glad His ear. What is the great ultimatum of all Christian effort? When I stood here the other morning preaching the Gospel, my mind was fully exercised with the winning of souls. But I seemed, while preaching, to get beyond that. I thought, Well, that is not the chief end after allthe chief end is to glorify God and even the saving of sinners is sought by the right-minded as the means to that end!

Then it struck me all of a sudden, If in Psalm singing and hymn singing we do really glorify God, we are doing more than in the preaching because we are not then in the meanswe are close upon the great end itself. If we praise God with heart and tongue we glorify Him in the surest possible mannerwe are really glorifying Him then! Whoever offers praise glorifies Me, says the Lord. Sing, then, my Brethren! Sing not only when you are together, but sing alone! Cheer your labor with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Make glad the family with sacred music! We sing too little, I am sure, yet the revival of religion has always been attended with the revival of Christian Psalmody.

Luthers translations of the Psalms were of as much service as Luthers discussions and controversies. And the hymns of Charles Wesley and Cennick and Toplady and Newton and Cowper aided as much in the quickening of spiritual life in England as the preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield. We need more singing! Sing more and murmur less! Sing more and slander less! Sing more and cavil less! Sing more and mourn less! God grant us today, as these shepherds did, to glorify God by praising Him.

I have not quite done with them. What was the subject of their praise? It appears that they praised God for what they had heard. If we think of it, there is good reason for blessing God every time we hear a Gospel sermon. What would souls in Hell give if they could hear the Gospel once more and be on terms in which salvation Grace might come to them? What would dying men give whose tune is all but over if they could once more come to the House of God and have another warning and another invitation? My Brethren, what would you give, sometimes, when you are shut up by sickness and cannot meet with the great congregationwhen your heart and your flesh cry out for the living God?

Well, praise God for what you have heard! You have heard the faults of the preacherlet him mourn them. You have heard his Masters message! Do you bless God for that? Scarcely will you ever hear a sermon which may not make you sing if you are in a right frame of mind. George Herbert says, Praying is the end of preaching. So it is, but praising is its end, too. Praise God that you hear there is a Savior! Praise God that you hear that the plan of salvation is very simple! Praise God that you have a Savior for your own soul! Praise God that you are pardoned, that you are saved! Praise Him for what you have heard!

But observe, they also praised God for what they had seen. Look at the twentieth verseheard and seen. There is the sweetest musicwhat we have experienced, what we have felt within, what we have made our own the things that we have made touching the King! Mere hearing may make some music, but the soul of song must come from seeing with the eye of faith! And, dear Friends, you who have seen with that God-given eyesightI pray you, let not your tongues be steeped in sinful silence! Speak loudly to the praise of Sovereign Grace!

One point for which they praised God was the agreement between what they had heard and what they had seen. Observe the last sentence. As it was told unto them. Have you not found the Gospel to be in yourselves just what the Bible said it would be? Jesus said He would give you Gracehave you not had it? He promised you resthave you not received it? He said that you should have joy and comfort and life through believing in Himhave you not had all these? Are not His ways ways of pleasantness and His paths, paths of peace? Surely you can say with the queen of Sheba, The half has not been told me.

I have found Christ more sweet than His servants could set Him forth as being. I looked upon the likeness as they painted it, but it was a mere daub as compared with Himselfthe King in His beauty! I have heard of the goodly land, but oh, it flows with milk and honey more richly and sweetly than men were ever able to tell me in their best trim for speech. Surely what we have seen keeps pace with what we have heard! Let us, then, glorify and praise God for what He has done.

This word to those who are not yet converted and I have done. I do not think you can begin at the seventeenth verse, but I wish you would begin at the eighteenth. You cannot begin at the seventeenthyou cannot tell to others what you have not felt. Do not try it. Neither teach in the Sunday school, nor attempt to preach if you are not converted. Unto the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes? But I would to God you would begin with the eighteenth versewondering! Wondering that you are sparedwondering that you are out of Hellwondering that still does His good Spirit strive with the chief of sinners! Wonder that this morning the Gospel should have a word for you after all your rejections of it and sins against God!

I should like you to begin there because then I should have good hope that you would go on to the next verse and change the first letter and so go from wondering to pondering. Oh Sinner, I wish you would ponder the doctrines of the Cross. Think of your sin, Gods wrath, judgment, Hell, your Saviors blood, Gods love, forgiveness, acceptance, Heaventhink on these things! Go from wondering to pondering!

And then I would to God you could go on to the next verse, from pondering to glorifying. Take Christ! Look to Him! Trust Him! Then sing, I am forgiven, and go your way a believing sinner and therefore a saved sinner, washed in the blood, and clean! Then go back, after that, to the seventeenth verse and begin to tell others.

But as for you Christians who are saved, I want you to begin this very afternoon at the seventeenth   
*Then will I tell to sinners round   
What a dear Savior I have found!   
Ill point to Your redeeming blood,   
And sayBehold, the way to God!*

Then when the day is over, get up to your chambers and wonder, admire and adore! Spend half an hour also like Mary in pondering and treasuring up the days work and the days hearing in your hearts and then close all with that which never must closego on tonight, tomorrow and all the days of your life, glorifying and praising God for all the things that you have seen and heard!

May the Master bless you for Jesus Christs sake. Amen.   
*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONLuke 2:1-20.* Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
Sermon #659 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SIMEON

NO. 659

A SERMON PREACHED   
BY C. H. SPURGEON

**And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. And the same man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him. Luke 2:25.**

WHAT a biography of a man! How short and yet how complete! We have seen biographies so wordy, full one half is nonsense and much of the other half too dull to be worth reading. We have seen large volumes spun out of mens letters. Writing desks have been broken open and private diaries exposed to the world. Nowadays if a man is a little celebrated, his signature, the house in which be was born, the place where he dines and everything else is thought worthy of public notice. So soon as he is departed this life he is embalmed in huge folios, the profit of which rests mainly, I believe, with the publishers and not with the readers.

Short biographies, which give a concise and exact account of the whole man, are the best. What do we care about what Simeon didwhere he was born, where he was married, what street he used to walk through, or what colored coat he wore? We have a very concise account of his history and that is enough. His name was Simeon. He lived in Jerusalem. The same man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him. Beloved, that is enough of a biography for any one of us. If, when we die, so much as this can be said of usour name. Our business, waiting for the Consolation of Israel. Our character, just and devout. Our companionship, having the Holy Spirit upon usthat will be sufficient to hand us down, not to time, but to eternity memorable among the just and estimable among all them that are sanctified!

Pause awhile, I beseech you, and contemplate Simeons character. The Holy Spirit thought it worthy of notice since He put a, behold, in the sentence! Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. He does not say, Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was King Herod. He does not say, Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem who was High Priest. He says, Behold!turn aside here, for the sight is so rare you may never see such a thing again so long as you live! Here is a perfect marvelBehold, there was one man in Jerusalem who was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

His character is summed up in two wordsjust and devout. Just that is his character before men. Devoutthat is his character before God. He was just. Was he a father? He did not provoke his children to anger, lest they should be discouraged. Was he a master? He gave unto his servants that which was just and equal, knowing that he also had his Master in Heaven. Was he a citizen? He rendered obedience unto the powers that then were, submitting himself to the ordinances of man for the

Lords sake.   
Was he a merchant? He overreached in no transaction, but providing  
things honest in the sight of all men, he honored God in his common   
business habits. Was he a servant? Then he did not render eye-service, as   
a man-pleaser, but in singleness of heart he served the Lord. If, as is very  
probable, he was one of the teachers of the Jews, then he was faithful. He   
spoke what he knew to be the Word of God although it might not be for   
his gain. And he would not, like the other shepherds, turn aside to speak   
error for the sake of filthy lucre. Before men he was just.   
But that is only half a good mans character. There are many who say,   
I am just and upright. I never robbed a man in my life. I pay twenty shillings in the pound. And if anybody can find fault with my character, let   
him speak. Am I not just? But as for their religion, such a one will say, I   
do not care about it. I think it is cant. Sir, you have only one feature of a   
good man and that the smaller.   
You do good towards man, but not towards God! You do not rob your  
fellow, but you rob your Maker! Will a man rob God? Yes, and think far  
less of it than he would if he robbed man. He who robs man is called a villain. He who robs God is often called a gentleman. Simeon had both features of a Christian. He was a just man, and he was also devout. Mark,  
it does not say he was a just man and religious. A man may be very religious and yet he may not be devout. Religion, you know, as the term is   
used, consists very much in outward observances. Godliness and devotion  
consist in the inward life and action arising from the inner spring of true   
consecration.   
It does not say here that Simeon was a religious man, for that he might   
have been and yet have been a Pharisee, a hypocrite, a mere professor.   
But no, he was a devout man. He valued the outward and visible sign,  
but he possessed the inward and spiritual Grace. Therefore he is called   
a just man and devout. Behold! says the Holy Spirit! Behold! for it is  
a rarity! Come here, you Christians of the present day! Many of you are   
just, but you are not devout! And some of you pretend to be devout, but  
you are not just. The just and the devout together make up the perfection  
of the godly man. Simeon was a just man and devout.   
But now, leaving the character of Simeon as a man, we shall endeavor  
to expound his blessed hope as a Believer. To this end we ask your attention, first, to the expectationhe was waiting for the Consolation of Israel. Secondly, the fulfillmentthat which he waited for, he saw. And   
when he found Jesus, he said, Lord, now let Your servant depart in   
peace. And thirdly, the explanation of that fulfillment, or how it is that   
the Lord Jesus is the Consolation of Israel.   
I. First, then, SIMEONS EXPECTATION. He was waiting for the Consolation of Israel. This was the position of all the saints of God, from the   
first promise, even to the time of Simeon. Poor old Simeon had now become grey-headed. It is very possible that he had passed the usual period  
allotted to mans life, but he did not wish to die! He wished for the Consolation of Israel. He did not wish that the tabernacle of his body might be  
dissolved, but he did hope that through the chinks of that old battered

tabernacle of his he might be able to see the Lord!   
Like the hoary-headed Christian of our times, he did not desire to die,   
but he did desire to be with Christ, which was far better. All the saints   
have waited for Jesus. Our mother Eve waited for the coming of Christ.   
When her first son was born, she said, I have gotten a man from the   
Lord. True, she was mistaken in what she saidit was Cain and not Jesus. But by her mistake we see that she cherished the blessed hope. That  
Hebrew Patriarch who took his son, his only son, to offer him for a burnt  
offering, expected the Messiah and well did he express his faith when he   
said, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb.   
He who once had a stone for his pillow, the trees for his curtains, the   
Heaven for his canopy and the cold ground for his bed, expected the coming of Jesus, for he said on his deathbedUntil Shiloh comes. The Lawgiver of Israel who was king in Jeshurun, spoke of him, for Moses said,  
A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren,  
like unto me: Him shall you hear. David celebrated Him in many a Prophetic songthe Anointed of God, the King of Israel. Him to whom all   
kings shall bow and all nations call Him blessed. How frequently does he   
in his Psalms sing about my Lord! The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit  
You at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool. But need we stop to tell you of Isaiah, who spoke of His passion and   
saw His Glory? Or of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Micah, Malachi and of  
all the rest of the Prophets who stood with their eyes strained, looking   
through the dim mists of futurity, until the weeks of prophecy should be   
fulfilleduntil the sacred day should arrive, when Jesus Christ should   
come in the flesh? They were all waiting for the Consolation of Israel! And,   
now, good old Simeon, standing on the verge of the period when Christ   
would comewith expectant eyes looked out for Him!   
Every morning he went up to the temple, saying to himself, Perhaps   
He will come today. Each night when he went home he bent his knee and   
said, O Lord, come quickly! Even so, come quickly! And yet, that morning he went to the Temple, little thinking, perhaps, the hour was at hand   
when he should see his Lord there! But there He was, brought in the arms   
of His mother, a little Babe. And Simeon knew Him!   
Lord, he said, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to   
Your word: for my eyes have seen Your Salvation. Oh, cries one, but we   
cannot wait for the Savior now! No, Beloved, in one sense we cannot for  
He is come already! The poor Jews are waiting for Him. They will wait in   
vain now for His first coming, that having passed already. Waiting for the   
Messiah was a virtue in Simeons dayit is the infidelity of the Jews now   
since the Messiah is come. Still there is a high sense in which the Christian ought to be every day waiting for the Consolation of Israel. I am very pleased to see that the doctrine of the Second Coming of   
Christ is gaining ground everywhere. I find that the most spiritual men in  
every place are looking for, as well as hastening unto, the coming of   
our Lord and Savior. I marvel that the belief is not universal, for it is so   
perfectly Scriptural. We are, we trust, some of us, in the same posture as  
Simeon. We have climbed the staircase of the Christian virtues from   
where we look for that blessed hope, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.   
Besides, if we do not believe in the Second Coming, every Christian waits   
for the Consolation of Israel at times when he misses the sweet consoling   
experience.   
I speak to some of you, perhaps, who are feeling that you have lost the light of the Lords face lately. You have not seen His blessed countenance. You have not heard His love-speaking voice. You have not listened to the tender accents of His lips, and you are longing for Him. You are, like Simeon, waiting for the Consolation of Israel. He will comethough He tarries, He will come. Christ does not leave His people entirely. Though He hides His face, He will come again! The child says the swallows are dead because they skim the purple sea. Wait, O Child, and the swallows shall  
come back again!   
The foolish one thinks that the sun has died out because he is hidden  
behind the clouds. Stop for a little season and the sun shall come again  
and you shall know that he was brewing behind dark clouds the April   
shower, mother to the sweet May flowers! Jesus is gone for a little while  
but He will come again! Christian! Be waiting for the Consolation of Israel!   
I hope, too, I have in this place some poor seeking sinner who is waiting  
for the like Consolation. Sinner! You will not have to wait forever! It is very   
seldom Christ Jesus keeps poor sinners waiting long. Sometimes He does.   
He answers them not a word, but then it is to try their faith. Though He  
keeps them waiting, He will not send them away empty. He will be sure to   
give them mercies, sooner or later. Though the promise tarries, wait for   
it, and you shall find it yet, to your souls salvation.   
Child of God! Has not your Father come to you yet? Cry for Him! Cry for   
Him! Your Father will come! Nothing fetches the parent to the child, like   
the childs cry. Cry, Little One, cry, you who have but little faith! Ah,  
but, you say, I am too weak to cry. Did you ever notice that the little   
one sometimes cries so very low that when you are sitting in the parlor  
with its mother, you do not hear it? Up she goes! There is the dear child   
crying upstairs. And off she goes! She can hear it, though you cannot  
because it is her child that cries.   
Cry, Little One! Let your prayers go up to Heaven. Though your minister does not hear itthough Unbelief says no one can hear itthere is a   
God in Heaven who knows the cry of the penitent! He heals the broken in  
heart and binds up their wounds. Sweet posture! To be waiting for the   
Consolation of Israel!   
II. This brings us to the second pointTHE FULFILMENT OF THIS EXPECTATION. Did Simeon wait in vain? Ah, no! He waited for consolation   
and he had the consolation for which he waited. Oh, I can picture   
Simeons frame! How altered it was that morning! He went, probably, an   
old man limping up to the Temple, his face sad with disappointment, his   
eyes dark with distress because he had not found that for which he   
looked. He wanted to see and could not see. He desired to know and he  
did not know.   
Sometimes, in his unbelieving moments, he thought that, like the   
Prophets and kings, he should wait long and seek, but never find. Do you  
not think you see him, when he held the Babe in his arms? Why, the old   
man did not then need his staff to lean ondown it went and both his   
arms grasped the Child! He may have trembled a little, but the mother of   
Jesus was not afraid to trust her Child to him. How young he felt! As   
young as when ten years ago he walked with light steps through the   
streets of Jerusalem!   
Scarcely in Heaven did old Simeon feel more happy than he did at that  
moment when he clasped the Babe in his arms! Do you not think you see  
him? Joy is flashing from his eyes! His lips speak sonnets which burst out  
like the chorus of immortals, when he says, Lord, now let Your servant   
depart in peace, according to Your word: for my eyes have seen Your Salvation. Ask now! Was he disappointed in the object of his search? Was   
Jesus equal to his expectations, the Consolation of Israel? We answer,  
Yes! We dare any person here, or in the wide world, to deny what we now  
assertthere is certainly sweet and blessed consolation in Jesus for all  
the people of God!   
I do not know whether any have ever been fools enough to say the Gospel is not comforting. I do not think they have. Most of them have said, It   
is a very good religion for old women and imbeciles, for sick peoplethose   
on deathbeds. The worst of men admit that religion is a very comfortable   
thing. Or if they do not admit it, they have the lesson to learn. Come, deist   
or skeptic, whichever you are, let me point you to Believers in the time of  
persecution. Look upon that face of Stephen, already lighted up with  
Heavens own Glory while they are stoning him!   
Let me bring you down through the ages of the rack and the wheel, the   
times of stocks and inquisitions. Let me tell you of martyrs who clapped   
their hands in the flames and while their limbs were burning at the stake   
could yet sing a carol, as if it were Christmas Day in their hearts, though  
it was Ash Day to their bodies! How often you find those who are foremost   
in suffering, foremost in joy! When men laid iron chains on their arms,   
God put golden chains of honor on their necks.   
When men heaped reproaches on their names, God heaped comforts on  
their souls. The peace cry, like the blood cry, let it never be hushed! The   
Christian race, by our martyrs and confessors, show the wide, wide world   
that there is a joy in religion that can quench the flame, snatch torture   
from the rack, the torment from the wheel! It can sing in prison! It can   
laugh cheerfully in the stocks and make our free and unimprisoned hearts   
burst through the bars of the dungeon and fly upwards, chanting Psalms   
to our God! Behold the Consolation of Israel!   
But the infidel replies, These are excitable moments. At such times   
persons are stimulated beyond their natural strength. Your examples are   
not fair. Come here, Unbeliever, and let me show you Christians in ordinary lifenot martyrs, not confessors, not men with blood-red crowns on   
their browsbut common men like yourself. See that husband? He has   
just returned from the funeral of his wife. Do you mark his countenance?  
He says, The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the   
name of the Lord.   
Could you do that? See that mother? Her child lies dead. And looking  
on it she says, He has done all things well. It is hard to part with him,   
but I will resign him to my God. Could you do that, Infidel? See yonder  
merchant? Ruin has overtaken himhe is reduced to poverty. Mark how

he lifts his hands to Heaven and cries, Although the fig tree shall not   
blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines. The labor of the olive shall fail   
and the fields shall yield no meat. The flock shall be cut off from the fold  
and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will   
joy in the God of my salvation.   
Could you do the like, Infidel? No, you could not. But there is consolation in Jesus Christ. I am half ashamed of some of you, my Brethren, who do not bear trouble well because you are not an honor to your religion as you ought to be. You should learn, if possible, to say, like JobThough He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. Alas, you say, it is easy enough for you to tell us so, but not quite so easy to practice. I grant yon that! But then it is the glory of the Gospel that makes us do things that are not easy. If it is a hard thing, so much the more honor to Godso much the more virtue in the Scripturesthat by their blessed influence and by the aid of the Holy Spirit, they enable us to bear trials under which others  
sink.   
But a little while ago I heard of an ungodly man who had a pious wife.   
They had but one daughter, a fair and lovely thing. She was laid on a bed   
of sicknessthe father and mother stood beside the bed. The solemn  
moment came when she must die. The father leaned over and put his arm   
round her and wept hot tears upon his childs white brow. The mother   
stood there too, weeping her very soul away. The moment that child was   
dead, the father began to tear his hair and curse himself in his despair!  
Misery had got hold upon him. But as he looked towards the foot of the   
bed, there stood his wife. She was not raving, she was not cursing. She wiped her eyes and said, I shall go to her, but she shall not return   
to me. The unbelievers heart for a moment rose in anger, for he imagined  
that she was a stoic. But the tears flowed down her cheeks, too. He saw  
that though she was a weak and feeble woman, she could bear sorrow  
better than he could and he threw his arms round her neck and said, Ah,  
Wife, I have often laughed at your religion. I will do so no more! There is   
much blessedness in this resignation. Would God that I had it, too! Yes,   
she might have answered, I have the Consolation of Israel. There is  
hear it, you despisers and wonder and perish!there is consolation in Jesus Christ!   
That dear Sister, whom I mentioned at the beginning of this service,   
was one of the noblest pictures of resignation I have ever seen. When I   
went to see her I could only describe her position like thisshe was sitting on the banks of the Jordan, singing, with her feet in the water, longing to cross the river. Ah, Pastor, she said, when I came in, how you   
have fed my soul and made my young days come over again. I did not  
think the Lord would give me such blessed seasons just before He took me   
Home. But now I must bid you good-by, for I am going up to my Jesus   
and I shall be with Him forever.   
I shall not forget how calm she looked! Ah, it is sweet to see a Christian   
die! It is the noblest thing on earththe dismissal of a saint from his labor to his reward! From his conflicts to his triumphs! The gorgeous pageantry of princes is as nothing. The glory of the setting sun is not to be   
compared with the heavenly light which illumine the soul as it fades from   
the organs of bodily sense to be ushered into the august Presence of the   
Lord! When dear Haliburton died, he said, I am afraid I shall not be able  
to bear another testimony to my Master, but in order to show you that I   
am peaceful and still resting on Christ, I will hold my hands up. And just  
before he died, he held both his hands up and clapped them together,  
though he could not speak!   
Have you ever read of the deathbed of Payson? I cannot describe it to   
you. It was like the flight of a seraph. John Knox, that brave old fellow,  
when he came to die, sat up in his bed and said, Now the hour of my dissolution is come. I have longed for it many a day, and I shall be with my  
Lord in a few moments. Then he fell back on his bed and died. We have  
many others of whom I might tell you. Such as that blessed Janeway, who   
said, O that I had lips to tell you a thousandth part of that which I now   
feel! You will never know the worth of Jesus till you come to your  
deathbed and then you will find Him a blessed Christ, when you need Him   
most.   
O Unbeliever, stand where death is at work! And if you love not the   
righteous in their life, you will say, none the less, like Balaam, Let me die   
the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his. Such is our  
holy religiona sweet and blessed consolation!   
III. And this brings us to the third point which is THE EXPLANATION   
OF THIS FACTto show to all men and to show to you, especially, that   
there is consolation and to explain how it is.   
In the first place, there is consolation in the doctrines of the Bible. I like   
a doctrinal religion. I do not believe in the statement of some people that  
they have no creed. A man says, for instance, I am not a Calvinist and I   
am not an Arminian. I am not a Baptist, I am not a Presbyterian, I am not   
an Independent. He says he is liberal. But this is only the license he   
claims for his own habit of disagreeing with everybody. He is one of that  
sort of people whom we generally find to be the most bigoted and least tolerant of others.   
He follows himself. And so belongs to the smallest denomination in the  
world! I do not believe that charity consists in giving up our denominational distinctions. I think there is a more excellent way. Even those who   
despise not faith, though they almost sacrifice it to their benevolence, will   
sometimes say, Well, I dont belong to any of your sects and parties.   
There was a body of men once who came out from all branches of the   
Christian Church with the hope that everybody else of true heart would   
follow them. The result, however, has been that they have only made another denomination, distinct alike in doctrine and discipline. I believe in creeds if they are based on Scripture. They may not secure  
unity of sentiment, but on the whole they promote it, for they serve as  
landmarks and show us the points at which many turn aside. Every man   
must have a creed if he believes anything. The greater certainty he feels   
that it is true, the greater his own satisfaction. In doubts, darkness and   
distrust, there can be no consolation. The vague fancies of the skeptic, as   
he muses over images and apprehensions too shapeless and airy to be incorporated into any creed may please for awhile, but it is the pleasure of a   
dream.   
I believe that there is consolation for Israel in the substance of faith   
and the evidence of things not seen. Ideas are too ethereal to lay hold of.  
The anchor we have is sure and steadfast. I thank God that the faith I   
have received can be molded into a creed and can be explained with words   
so simple that the common people can understand it and be comforted by  
it. Then look at the doctrines themselvesthe doctrines of the Bible. What   
well-springs of consolation they are! How consolatory the doctrine of election to the Israel of God! To some men it is repulsive. But show me the gracious soul that has come to put his trust under the wings of the Lord God of IsraelChosen in Christ, will be a sweet stanza in his song of  
praise!   
To think that before the hills were formed, or the channels of the sea   
were scooped out, God loved me! That from everlasting to everlasting His   
mercy is upon His people! Is not that a consolation? You who do not believe in election, go and fish in other watersbut in this great sea there   
are mighty fishes. If you could come here, you would find rich consolation.  
Or come again to the sweet doctrine of redemption. What consolation is  
there, Beloved, to know that you are redeemed with the precious blood of  
Christ! Not the mock redemption taught by some people, which pretends  
that the ransom is paid, but the souls that are ransomed may, notwithstanding, be lost. No, no! A positive redemption which is effectual for all   
those for whom it is made.   
Oh, to think that Christ has so purchased you with His blood that you   
cannot be lost! Is there not consolation in that doctrinethe doctrine of   
redemption? Think, again, of the doctrine of atonementthat Christ Jesus has borne all your sins in His own body on the Crossthat He has  
put away your sins by the sacrifice of Himself! There is nothing like believing in full Atonementthat all our sins are washed away and carried into   
the depths of the sea. Is there not consolation there? What do you say,  
Worldling, if you could know yourself to be elect of God the Father? If you   
could believe yourself redeemed by His only begotten Son? If you knew  
that for your sins there was a complete ransom paidwould not that be a   
consolation to you?   
Perhaps you answer, No. That is because you are a natural man and   
do not discern spiritual things. The spiritual man will reply, Consolation?   
Yes, sweet as honey to these lips! Yes, sweeter than the honeycomb to my  
heart are those precious doctrines of the Grace of God. Let us pass on to  
consolatory promises. Oh, how sweet to the soul in distress are the promises of Jesus! For every condition there is a promise! For every sorrow  
there is a cordial! For every wound there is a balm! For every disease there   
is a medicine. If we turn to the Bible, there are promises for all cases. Now let me appeal to you, my Friends. Have you not felt how consoling   
the promises are to you in seasons of adversity and hours of anguish? Do  
you not remember some occasion when your spirits were so broken down   
that you felt as if you never could have struggled through your woes and   
sorrows had not some sweet and precious Word of God come to your help?  
Minister of the Gospel, do you not remember how often you have feared  
that your message would be of no effect? But you have heard your Master  
whisper, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Sunday school Teacher, have not you said, I have labored in vain and

spent my strength for nothing? And have you not then heard Jesus say,  
My Word shall not return unto Me void? Mourner, you have lost a near  
relation, have you not heard Jesus then say, All things work together for  
good? Softly wipe that tear away, O Widowwould not your heart have   
broken if it had not been for the assurance, Your Maker is your husband? Fatherless child, what would have become of you if you had not  
turned to the consoling promise, Leave your fatherless children and let   
your widows trust in Me?   
But why need I tell you, Christian, that there are consoling promises in  
the Bible? You know there are! I would not sell a leaf of the Bible for a   
world, nor would I change a promise of it for stars made of gold

*Holy Bible, book Divine,   
Precious treasure! You are mine.*   
No such comfort can I find as what I derive from you! You are Heaven on earth to me, blessed Bible! Verily, if we wait for Christ, we shall find that in His Gospel there is consolation for Israel. Not only have we consolatory

promises and consolatory doctrines, but we have consolatory influences in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. There are times, my Friends, when all the promises in the world are of no use to uswhen all the doctrines in the world would be of no avail unless we had a hand to apply them to us.

There lies a poor man. He has been wounded in battle. In yonder hospital there is a bundle of liniment. The blood is flowing. He has lost an arm. He has lost a leg. There are plenty at the hospital who can bind up his wounds and plenty of medicines for all that he now suffers. But what use are they? He may lie forlorn on the battlefield and die unless there is someone to bring the ambulance to carry him to the placehe cannot reach it himself. He lifts himself up on that one remaining arm, but he falls down faint. The blood is flowing freely and his strength is ebbing with it. Oh, then it is not the liniment he cares for! It is not the ointmentit is someone who can bring those things to him! Yes, and if the remedies were all put there by his side, it may be he is so faint and sick that he can do nothing for his own relief.

Now, in the Christian religion there is something more than prescriptions for our comfort. There is One, even the Spirit of Truth, who takes of the things of Jesus and applies them to us. Think not that Christ has merely put joys within our reach that we may get them for ourselves! He comes and puts the joys inside our hearts! The poor, sick, way-worn pilgrim not only finds there is something to strengthen him to walk, but he is borne on eagles wings! Christ does not merely help him to walk, but carries him and says, I will bind up your wounds. I will come to you Myself.

O poor Soul, is not this joy for you? You have been often told by your minister to believe in Christ, but you say you cannot. You have often been invited to come to Jesus, but you feel you cannot come. Yes, but the best of the Gospel is that when a sinner cannot come to Christ, Christ can come to him! When the poor soul feels that it cannot get near Christ, Christ will be sure to draw him. O Christian, if you are, tonight, laboring under deep distresses, your Father does not give you promises and then leave you! The promises He has written in the Word He will engrave on your heart. He will manifest His love to you and by His blessed Spirit, which blows like the wind, take away your cares and troubles.

Be it known unto you, O Mourner, that it is Gods prerogative to wipe every tear from the eyes of His people. I shall never forget hearing John Gough say, in his glowing mannerWipe away tears? That is Gods prerogative. And yet, said he, I have done it when the drunkard has been reclaimed and the tears of a wife have been wiped from her cheeks. O Beloved, it is a blessed thing to wipe others tears away! But Lo, these things works God oftentimes with men. He not only gives you the handkerchief, but wipes your eyes for you! He not only gives you the sweet

wine, but holds it to your lips and pours it into your mouth!

The good Samaritan did not say, Here is the wine and here is the oil for you. What did he do? He poured in the oil and the wine. He did not say, Now, mount the beastbut he set him on it and took him to the inn. Glorious Gospel, that provides such things for poor lost onescomes after us when we cannot come after itbrings us Grace when we cannot win Grace! Here is Grace in the giving as well as the gift! Happy people, to be thus blessed of God! Simeon waited for the Consolation of Israel, and he found it. May you find it, too!

Two short addresses to two sorts of people, and then we shall be done. To you, you followers of Jesus, let me speak. I have one thing to ask of you. With such a Father who loves youwith such a Savior who has given Himself for you and does give Himself to youwith such a good Spirit to abide with you, instruct you and comfort youwith such a Gospelwhat now bows you down? What is meant by those wrinkled brows? What is meant by those flowing tears? What is meant by those aching hearts? What is meant by that melancholy carriage?

What do they mean? you say! Why, I have troubles. But, Brother, have you forgotten the exhortation of the Lord? Cast your burden on the Lord. He will sustain you. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. Do, Brethren, do try to be as glad as you can. Rejoice forevermore! A cheerful Christian recommends religion. We usually look in the window of a tradesmans shop to see what he sells. And persons very frequently look into our faces to ascertain what are the thoughts of our heart. Alas, that they should see any of us looking habitually sad.

Some persons think that sour faces and somber garments are fitting emblems of sanctity. They would count it wicked to laugh, or if they were to do such a thing as smile in chapel they would think that they had committed an unpardonable sin, though I never saw any law against that yet. All that is in us should bless His holy name, from the most playful fancy to the most sublime reverie. You need not emulate those who, to appear righteous, disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Let me beg of you, Christian, when you fast, to be of a cheerful countenance! Appear not unto men to fast. Be ever so sad, try and keep your sadness to yourself. Do not let people hear you murmur, lest they should say, Look at that Christian, he is weak as we are.

You have heard the old fiction that Jesus Christ never laughed or smiled. It was brought forward at a friends, where I was once staying. There was a little child in the room, who when she heard it, ran up to her father and said, Papa, that gentleman did not tell the truth. Of course everyone looked at her and waited for her explanation. I know that Jesus did, Papa, she added, for the little children loved Him. And I dont think they would have loved Him if He had never smiled. Did not He say, Suffer little children to come unto Me, and He took them up in His arms and gave them His blessing?

Do you think any good Christian could take up a little child without smiling? And if he did not smile, do you think the child would go to him? Jesus Christ did smile. A cheerful face wins honor to religion! A cheerful deportment glorifies God, for He has said, Let the saints be joyful in glory. Let them sing aloud upon their beds: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Be joyful, Christians! Be joyful!

*Why should the children of a King,   
Go mourning all their days?*

And now, before I close, let me appeal to those who have not this consolation. Men and Brethren, give heed. For Israel there is consolation. But for youwhat is to become of some of you who have not this consolation at all? Worldly Men, from where do you draw your bliss? From the polluted ditches of a filthy world? Soon, alas, will they be emptied! And what will you do then? I see a Christian. There he is! He has been drinking all his life out of the river that makes glad the city of our God. And when he gets to Heaven, he goes to the same stream. He drinks and says, This water is from the same fountain that I drank on earth. I drink the same bliss, but draw it nearer the fountain-head than I did before.

But I think I see you who have been drinking out of the black, dark, filthy reservoirs of earth, and when you get into eternity, you say, Where is the stream at which I once slaked my thirst? You look and it is gone! Suppose you are a drunkard. Drunkenness was your happiness on earth. Will you be drunk in Hell? There it would afford you no gratification. Here the theater was your pastimewill you find a theater in Hell? The songs of foolish lasciviousness were here your delightwill you find such songs in eternity? Will you be able to sing them amidst unutterable burnings?

Can you hum those lascivious notes when you are drinking the fearful gall of eternal woe? Oh, surely, no!   
The things in which you once trusted and found your peace and comfort will have gone forever! Oh, what is your happiness tonight, my Friends? Is it a happiness that will last? Is it a joy that will endure? Or are you holding in your hand an apple of Sodom and saying, It is fair, it is passing fair, when you know that you only look on it now, but will have to eat it in eternity? See the man who has that apple in his handhe puts it to his mouthhe has to masticate it in eternity. And it is ashesashes on his lipsashes between his teethashes in his jawsashes forever ashes that shall go into his blood and make each vein a road for the hot feet of pain to travel! His heart is an abode of misery and his whole frame a den of loathsomeness!   
Ah, if you have not this Consolation of Israel, do you know what you must have? You must have eternal torment! I have often remarked that the most wicked men hold the doctrine that there is no torment for the body in Hell. Riding some time ago in a railway carriage with a man who seemed to have no idea of religion, he said, Im as cold as the devil, and repeated the observation several times. I said to him, Hes not at all cold, Sir. I suppose you are a believer in Hell, then? he replied. Yes, I am, I said, because I am a believer in the Bible. I dont think there is any fire for the body, I dont. I think it is the conscienceremorse of conscience, dismay and despair and such likeI dont think it has anything to do with the body, he said.

And strange enough, many other ungodly men with whom I have spoken on the subject all seem to be partial to the Hell that only deals with the conscience. The reason is this. They do not feel for their soul. They are natural men who have a natural care about their body, but they think that so long as their body gets off, they will not care for Hell at all. Hear this, then, you ungodly men and women! You care not for the torture of the soul. Hear thisand let there be no metaphor or figure! Hear it, for I speak Gods plain language!   
For the body, too, there is a Hell. It is not merely your soul that is to be tortured. What do you care for conscience? What do you care for memory? What do you care for imagination? Hear this, then, Drunkard! Hear this, man of Pleasure! That body which you pamper shall lie in pain! It was not a figure which Christ used when He said, In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.   
It was a tongue, Sir! It was a flame, Sir. It was not a metaphorical tongue and it was not a metaphorical flame! It was not metaphorical water that he wanted. Real, positive, actual flames tormented the body of that rich Dives in Hell! Ah, wicked man, those very hands of yours that now grasp the wine cup shall grasp the cup of your damnation! The feet that carry you to the theater shall lie in brimstone forever! The eyes that look on the spectacles of lustit is no figure, Sirthose same eyes shall see murderous spectacles of misery! The same head which has oftentimes here throbbed with headache, shall there beat with pains you have not yet felt!   
Your heart, for which you care so little, shall become an emporium of miseries where demons shall empty the scalding boilers of woe. It is not fiction! Read the Bible and make a fiction of it if you can. There is a fire which knows no abatement, a worm which never dies, a flame unquenchable! As you go down those stairs, think there is a Hell. It is no fiction. Let the old doctrine stand out once more, that God has prepared Tophet of old. The pile thereof is wood and much smokethe breath of the Lord, like a flame of fire, does kindle it.   
There is a Hell! O that you would flee from it! O that by Divine Grace you would escape it! Sodom was no figurethat was real hail of fire from Heaven. Hurry, said the angel, hurry! and put his hand behind the timely-warned fugitive. Man! I am come as an angel from Heaven to you tonight and I would put my hand upon your shoulder and cry, Hurry! Hurry! Look not behind you! Stay not in all the plain! Hurry to the mountain lest you be consumed!   
If you know your need of a Savior, come and trust Him! If you feel your need of salvation, come and have it, for it is said, Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely. None are excluded but those who exclude themselves. None are taken in but those whom Divine Grace takes in through the sovereign mercy of our God. May God receive you in His arms! May sinners be delivered from the pit! May those find Him who never yet have sought the Consolation of Israel!   
Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I ask your prayers, that God may bless this sermon to the souls of men.

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YOUR SALVATION   
NO. 1417

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, JUNE 2, 1878, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation.   
Luke 2:28-30.**

LAST Lords-day morning [No. 1416, The Faithful Saying] we used the broad axe to clear the forest of self-righteousnessone after another human hopes were made to fall, for the axe was laid at the root of the trees. Now let us cultivate the clearing and sow the good seed! We might have had for our slogan, then, The Lord of Hosts has purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth. We tried to sweep away every vestige of anything like self-trust as we showed that Christ Jesus came to save men as sinners and that only as sinners could they have any part or lot in Him. Our Lord gave Himself for our sins, but He never gave Himself for our righteousness! We bore witness that human goodness is a mere fiction and that it is rather a hindrance than a help to the work of salvation, since it opposes itself to the grand principle of Grace by which, alone, men can be saved. So far our work has been to root out, to pull down, to destroy and to throw down. And we hope it has been done very thoroughly.

But there is a time to build up as well as a time to break down. And as we showed on the former occasion where salvation is not and cannot be, so today let us, by the help of Gods Spirit, endeavor to point out where salvation really isso that those who have learned to look away from themselves may now be taught to look to Christ! May the Holy Spirit grant us this desire of our heart and may thousands, by this sermon, find salvation!

Observe that Simeon found Christ in the Temple, being conducted there by the Holy Spirit. There was an ancient promise, The Lord whom You seek shall suddenly come to His Temple, and this probably drew the holy man to the courts of the Lord. But the Lord might have come and Simeon might not have been there. Or the good old man might have been occupied in some other court of the holy place. But, being led of the Spirit, he came to the appointed spot at the very time when the mother of Christ was bringing the Baby in her arms to do for Him according to the Law. In this, Simeon is an instance of the Truth of God that they find Christ who are led by the Spirit and they, alone. No man ever comes to Christ by his own wit and wisdom, nor by his own unprompted willhe, only, who is drawn of the Spirit comes unto Christ.

We must submit ourselves to Divine teaching and Divine drawing, or else Christ may come in His Temple, but we shall not perceive Him. I, therefore, would earnestly remark at the outset of this discourse, how necessary it is that we should submit ourselves to the movements of the Holy Spirit upon our souls. Let me rather say what a privilege it is to be moved by the Spirit and how gladly we should welcome His Divine influences. Beloved Hearer, as you love your soul, be very tender towards the Holy Spirit and prize even the least spark of His Divine fire. Quench not the Spirit, neither grieve Him. Prize the love of the Spirit and pray to feel His power. When He comes upon you to convict you of sin, be plastic in His hand! Yield to His teaching and humbly confess the faults and follies of which He convicts you.

When He comes to lead you gently to the Savior, be not as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, but gladly follow where He draws, according to the prayer of the spouse in the song, Draw me, we will run after You. All your hope of finding Christ, dear seeking Friend, lies in the Spirit of God illuminating your understanding, constraining your will and quickening your affectionstherefore never vex Him, but be ever ready to obey His faintest monition. The wind blows where it wills and when you feel its breath, be glad to spread your wings that you may be borne upward by its power.

Simeon, being thus led of the Spirit, came where Christ was, but mark how quick the old mans eyes were to see Him! How should He know that this Baby in swaddling clothes was the Lords Christ? Doubtless there were many others in the temple who saw Joseph and Mary and the priest, but they thought that nothing was to be seen but a young peasant woman and her husband bringing their poor offering to redeem their first-born child. The frequenters of the Temple passed to and fro and felt no interest in so common a scenebut the watching eyes of Simeon had no sooner lighted upon the infant Person of our Divine Lord than at once they were held spellbound and filled with tears of joy! The aged saint went immediately to the mother, took up the Baby in his arms and without hesitation said, Mine eyes have seen Your salvation.

Those who have been looking and longing for Christ are usually the first to perceive Him! This man had been waiting for the consolation of Israel and in the process he had gained discernment so that when Jesus appeared he knew Him at once. O Soul, if you are longing for Christ, you will know when He is near you, even as the thirsting harts of the desert scent the waters from afar. If you have an intense hunger after the Lord Jesus, you will not need to be told which is breadyou will not be deceived by a stone, for your hunger will instruct you. In this case an instinct springs out of an appetite, discernment grows out of desireif you long for Christ, you will not readily be deceived by false teachers, for you will know what your soul craves after and will not be content with anything else!

As soon as a truly awakened soul sees Jesus, though it is but the beginnings of Him, it recognizes Him! It recognizes the hem of His garment and the print of His feet. Though the Lord is seen only as an Infant and the hearts idea of Him is very incomplete, yet He is perceived to be The Incomparable One and the soul cries out, He is all my salvation and all my desire. May we thus be taught by the Spirit of God and thus made to long for Christand we shall have a quickness of eye to perceive Him and to see infinitely more in Him than this blind world has ever dreamed! From Simeon we shall try to learn this morning. Should not the aged teach us wisdom?

Three things appear to me to be worthy of our attentive observation. First, that Christ is salvation, for that is the pith and marrow of Simeons songMy eyes have seen Your salvation. Secondly, that Christ is to be taken up into the arms and looked upon. And thirdly, that when He is thus treated, Christ has a wonderful effect upon the soul. May we be led to try all this for ourselves. Personal testing is far better than mere hearing. I may preach to you and it may end in nothing, but if you will now come and take my Lord in your arms, an eternity of good will come of it! O taste and see that the Lord is good!

I. In the first place we learn from Simeon that CHRIST IS SALVATION. He is a Savior, for so the angels sang Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. But He is more than a SaviorHe is salvation itself! Moses sang, He also has become my salvation. David said, The Lord is my light and my salvation, and Isaiah exclaimed, Behold, God is my salvation. It is well to see salvation in the work, life and death of Christ, but we must never forget that the essence of it lies in His PersonHe Himself is salvation!

Then he took Him up in his arms and said, My eyes have seen Your salvation. This was before our Lord had begun to preach or to teach, or to suffer for our sinsas a Baby He was Gods salvation! The Gospel loses very much of its sweetness when the Person of Christ is placed in the background and treated as if it were a mere myth, or as if it were quite a secondary consideration. Why, this is the choicest dainty of the feast! It is the most substantial food whereon the saints are nourishedHis flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed! Everything about our Lord is saving, but He, Himself, is salvation. His teaching, His example, His love, His tenderness, His sufferings, His Gloryall help usbut it is His own glorious self which puts efficacy into them! Had He not been Man, He could not have died! And had He not been God, His dying could not have availed for our redemption!

We are bid to come, not to His work, but to HimCome unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden. To Him we come and our heart can say, He only is my rock and my salvation. Let us pursue this theme by saying of our Lord that He is the only salvation. Simeon had not found another. We are told of that aged saint, that he was just and devoutand assuredly if any man could have seen salvation by the Law, Simeon would have seen it! Just towards man, devout towards God, he had hit upon the true balance of a perfect character! But he had not seen salvation in his own character! He looked for it to the Lords Christ. Neither to his honest actions before his fellow men, nor to his secret prayers and communing

with God did Simeon turn for eternal life, otherwise he would not have been looking for a salvation which he had already foundnor would he, at the sight of Jesus, have rapturously exclaimed, My eyes have seen Your salvation.

Not in yourself, O Simeon! Not in all that you had done, or felt, or said had you seen salvation! But there in the Baby you did behold it with supreme delight! Simeon, too, had been very familiar with the courts of the Lords House. He was one of those who almost lived in the temple. Sacrifices were seen by him every morning and every evening and upon all high festivals. But in the blood of bullocks and lambs he had never seen salvation. Frequently did he gaze upon the instructive types and symbolic ordinances of the Law. But as he looked on them he saw only shadows and still watched for the Substance. Never over the morning lamb, or the paschal supper, had Simeon said, My eyes have seen Your salvationthat exclamation was never uttered till he had seen Christ Himself!

Beloved, salvation is not to be found in ordinances nor in sacraments! God forbid we should say, when we have seen a Baptism, or the imitation of it, We yield You hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it has pleased You to regenerate this infant with Your Holy Spirit, to receive him for Your own child by adoption and to incorporate him in Your holy Church. There are some who wickedly talk so, though we can hardly imagine that they believe what they say! It is in vain to show them their follythey are wedded to itbut let us pray, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. God forbid we should talk about salvation in connection with the Lords Supper as the superstitious do, who seem to regard it as a passport to Paradise and, therefore, press it upon the dying! Truly we may, in the Lords Supper, eat and drink condemnation to ourselves unless we discern the Lords body.

It is in the Lord Himself that there is salvation and in none othernot even in the outward ordinances of Gods ordaining is salvation to be found, for the Lord has not placed it there. See Jesus and you have seen salvation! And the only salvation! The most moral life and the most attentive remembrance of sacred ceremonies will land you short of the salvation of your soul unless you see Jesus and take Him to be your All in All. We must all learn to sing that song which Isaiah has recorded in his 12th chapterBehold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation.

According to Simeons song, the Lord Jesus is Gods salvation. Dwell on that little word, Your. My eyes have seen Your salvation. In the Person of Christ we see the salvation which God had of old covenanted to bestow upon His peoplethe salvation which, in due season, the Lord had prepared before the face of all peoplea Light to lighten the Gentiles and the Glory of His people Israel. The promised, predestinated and prepared salvation of God is Christ Jesus! This is the salvation of which the Prophets spoke, to which all the symbols pointedthe salvation which was hidden from ages and from generations that it might shine forth like the sun upon this favored dispensation. It is a salvation devised and provided by God which manifests and glorifies God! It is a salvation which is Godlike, being both just and gracious! It is great beyond conception! In a word, it is Gods salvation.

O Beloved, think much of Christ because the Lord God Almighty ordained Him for you and gives Him to you! God gave up His own Son for you, even His well-beloved Son! And He Himself, by the Holy Spirit, has revealed Him to you and in you, teaching you to know Him, to trust Him, to love Him and to follow Him! Therefore value Jesus beyond all price as Gods own salvation! God Himself accepts Christ in our place and makes Him our salvationwill we not accept Him? God Himself does rest in Christwill we not rest in Him? God smells a sweet savor in the Sacrifice which Christ has offeredwill we not also rejoice and eat the peace offering and be glad before the Lord? Are any of you seeking salvation at this moment? I pray you do not think of inventing a savior of your own, but are willing to take Gods salvation! And when you ask what and who that salvation is, our only answer must beChrist is the salvation of God!

If you have seen Jesus by the eyes of faith, your eyes have seen Gods salvation! You are saved, saved on the spot, saved forever! Jesus is Heavens balm for earths wounds, Gods remedy for mans diseases! Do not put away this priceless gift of infinite mercy. Receive it heartily receive it at once! Jesus is set before you, take Him up in your arms! When Simeon said, My eyes have seen Your salvation, he must have meant that in that little Baby he saw salvation set forth in its essence. Can you bring yourselves, now, in fancy and in faith, which may, for once, work together, into the courts of the Temple? Can you see Mary with the little Christ in her arms? Look upon Him and take Him up and put yourself into Simeons place and say, My eyes have seen Your salvation.

This little child is salvation and yet how can it be? By the light of Scripture we can understand what else would seem incredible. For here is, first, God in human flesh! The Divine Nature in mysterious union with the human! Behold, He who is now in your arms as an Infant is also the Infinite God! Feeble as He is as to His humanity, He is Omnipotent as to His Deity! He is at once the Son of Man and the Son of God! Herein is mans salvation! When we think of the fact that God came down to our low estate and espoused our nature, we are sure that He means nothing but good to man and we are ready to burst out with Simeons joyous exclamation and cry, My eyes have seen Your salvation! We are sure that man will be lifted up to Heaven now that Heaven has come down to man!

Our Lord was not merely a Child, but a poor Child. He was so poor that His mother, when she had to redeem Him, could not bring a lamb, which was the sacrifice for all who could afford it. She presented the poorer offering, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons, and so she came as a poor woman and He was presented to the Lord as a poor womans Child. Herein lies, also, rich comfort for lowly hearts. And as they think of it, each one may say, My eyes have seen Your salvation. When I think of the Prince of Glory and the Lord of angels stooping so low as this, that a

poor woman bears Him in her arms and calls Him her Baby, surely there must be salvation for the lowest, the poorest and the most sunken! When the all-glorious Lord, in order to be Incarnate, is born a Baby, born of a poor woman and publicly acknowledged as a poor womans child, we feel sure that He will receive the poorest and most despised when they seek His face! Yes, Jesus, the son of the carpenter, means salvation to carpenters and all others of lowly rank!

But why has Mary brought Him to the Temple? She has brought Him to redeem Him. He was her firstborn and therefore He must be redeemed. Was He then under the Law? Yes, for our sakes He was under the Law and He who redeemed us had to be, Himself, redeemed! When I think of the 12 and sixpence, or thereabouts, which His mother paid as redemption money, what a contrast rises before me! He has redeemed us unto God by His blood and yet, as Marys firstborn, a price was paid in silver for Him. A good price that I was priced at of them. Now, because our Lord Jesus came under the Law and obeyed its precepts, we see salvation in Him. When God Himself, Incarnate, came under the Law so as to have redemption money paid for Him, we understand it all, for it is written, But when the fullness of 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.

This wondrous stoop of Deity to lowly humanity and this marvelous honoring of the Law in our nature by One who is Immanuel, God With Us, has brought salvation to our fallen race! Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, for Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christthat we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith! But, to my mind, Simeon did not only see salvation represented in its Essence, but his faith saw salvation guaranteed by the appearance of the wondrous Child. Incarnation is the beginning of Substitution and the commencement of Substitution is the guarantee of the completion and the continuance of it! Our Lord would not have taken upon Himself the nature of the seed of Abraham if He had not intended to do so effectually to redeem and deliver them. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He, also, Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

Be you sure of this, that He will not commence to battle with Satan and then leave the conflict before the enemy is destroyed! In that Baby, Simeon did well to see all the work of saving men, for the appearing of the Lord in our flesh and blood was the sure pledge of it! He saw, there, a perfect obedience presented to God, for the Baby was brought under the Law at the very outset and its redemption money was paida sure sign that to the end the Incarnate God would say, Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. No jot or tittle of the Law would Christ omit, since even as a Baby He was both circumcised and presented in the Temple according to the Law. Simeon, I doubt not, saw in the presentation of Christ in the temple, a foreshadowing of His death on the Cross. The time would come when He must be brought to the altar and no redemption would be offered for Him, for He, Himself, must be the price for His people.

Simeon saw, as he gazed upon the Child, the agony and bloody sweat, the Cross and passion, for he knew that the Incarnate God would not shrink from anything which He had undertaken. That fair and lovely face, the most beautiful probably that human eye ever rested uponSimeon could, by faith, see it more marred than that of any man while, in our place, He suffered the wrath of God. Simeon was so well instructed that his faith saw the Child, in due time, deaddead because the Law had carried out its penalty and the Sin-Bearer had been made to die. And he could see the Resurrection, too. As he saw the Child carried home by the rejoicing mother, because He had been redeemed, he foresaw the hour when Jesus should return unto the Father, having accomplished eternal redemption for all His people! He saw in that Child both Light and Glory and he felt deep peace suffuse his mind at the sight and, therefore, I feel sure that he saw in the Infant Christ the pledge and assurance of that perfected work which closed with, It is finished.

Bethlehem ensures Gethsemane and Calvary, for the Christ of God will not fail nor be discouraged, but having put forth His hand, He will finish the work which His Father gave Him to do. So then, Beloved, if you see Christ, you have seen the sum and total of His work. His Person is so intimately connected with all that He has done that He bears within Himself all its virtue and efficacyand by a look at Him we receive the result of all that He has accomplished! Trust Jesus as born in our nature, as living a life of holiness, as dying a sacrificial death, as buried, as risen, as interceding and as, by-and-by, to return, and you have salvation! Jesus anywhere, Jesus everywhere is salvation! Those who have only a contracted view of Him and behold Him rather in His Infancy than in His Glory have, nevertheless, seen His salvation!

Come, then, you trembling, tottering, timorous ones and see salvation secured by a Savior who exactly suits your weakness! Even a feeble old man can lift a baby! Come in your feebleness and embrace the Savior in whose condescending littleness salvation lies secure! I might say many things here, but I prefer just to keep to that one point, that Jesus Christ is the whole of salvation. Simeon did not say, My eyes have seen a part of Your salvation. No, but the whole of it. Christ bought, by His blood, all that was necessary for our redemption! And having bought it, He brought it down to us, descending to seek and to save the lost. He came on earth to proclaim salvation and to let all men know that it is treasured up in Him. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.

As He contains salvation so does He dispense it, for He is exalted on high to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins. As He dispenses it, so out of His fullness has He made all of us to receive Grace for Grace. Because He draws us to Himself, we have come and are coming to Him perpetually. In Him we have our life preserved and by Him our steps are upheld. Because He lives, we, also, liveHe is made of God unto us wisdom and sanctification. Christ has salvation within Himself and he that

gets Him has complete salvation. He that believes in Him has everlasting life. Brothers and Sisters, you are saved from the ruin of the Fall if you have Christ! The second Adam has repaired the ruins of the first. Brothers and Sisters, you are saved from the guilt of sin if you have Christ, for your sin is yours no longerit is not imputed to youThe Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Brothers and Sisters, you are delivered from the power of original sin if you have Christ for, behold, the new-born life within you shall be in you a well of water springing up unto everlasting life! Christ has entered into you and He will bind the strong-armed man and cast him out. In having Christ, my Brethren, you have obtained victory over the world, the flesh and the devilfor this is the victory which overcomes all theseeven our faith! Go forward and grasp what is already your own. Yes, and when death comes, it shall not be death to you, for he that lives and believes in Him shall never die! You shall be more than a conqueror in this thing, alsotherefore be not in bondage through fear of death! You have salvation in every aspect of it and every form of it as soon as you have obtained Christ.

Very commonplace teaching, perhaps, you think. Yes, let it be commonplace! Let it be the bread you live upon, the air you breathe. I beseech you never forget that the whole of salvation is in Christ! Do not expect to find a portion of it in yourselves, nor in outward ordinances, nor in the works of the Law, nor in priestcraft, nor anywhere elsethe body of salvation is Christ and all its substance is in Him. Do you object to this? Then let me ask you, in what point is Christ deficient? What more do you need? Do you need penances? Has He not already suffered all that Justice requires? What do you need? Would you toil to gain the kingdom of Heaven? Lo, He has opened it to all Believers by a toil which covered Him with bloody sweat! What more is required? Washing? There is the fountain filled with blood. Clothing? There is the robe of spotless righteousness. Medicine? Truly with His stripes we are healed!

Think of anything that can be required to make a man perfect and you will find it all in Christ. For you are complete in Him. Christ is all. Suppose, Beloved, that our Lord Jesus were not perfect as a Savior, what then? Could any of us make up the deficiency? What is there of ours that we could bring to Him? If His robe of righteousness were not finished, would any of our filthy rags be fit to be joined to His cloth of gold? If that fountain were not full and efficacious for cleansing, what would you pour into it? What could you contribute but your own pollution? What help could that be? Dream of yoking a gnat with an archangel and then imagine that you can help your Lord in the work of salvation! Shall a creeping worm be needed to complete the work of Him who made the world? What wild nonsense is this! Must the Son of God be helped by sinners dead in sin? O Friends, if Jesus is not able to save you from first to last, you are lost, for neither yourself, nor priest, nor pope can bring anything to the Lord but dross and dungand shall this be added to that most fine gold tried in the fire with which Christ redeems the souls of men?

At this moment I speak personally of my own confidenceI have no hope of being saved if Jesus is not the whole of my salvation. I trust Him in everything and for everything and I solemnly warn any here who are trusting a little in Christ and also somewhat in themselves, that their hope will be vain! Jesus must be everything or nothing! If we take Christ we must take the whole of Christ. There must be no picking and choosing. We must have all of Christ and He must be all our salvation and all our desire. What hinders? Surely we delight to do this at once!

II. We leave our first head for you to think upon and turn to the second. CHRIST IS TO BE TAKEN UP INTO OUR ARMS AND TO BE LOOKED AT. I am quite sure that when Simeon took Christ up into his arms, although that was a physical action, yet there was a spiritual action underneath it. It was in his heart that he took up our Lord. And when his natural eyes saw Christ, he beheld Him also with the eyes of his soulof this we are sure, for if the mere sight of Christ with his eyes had been so pleasing to Simeon, he would have said, Lord, let Your servant never go away, for my eyes have seen Your salvation. Let me, therefore, stay here and always see Him.

But the sight was spiritual and, therefore, he, though he had known Christ after the flesh, did not desire to know Him any morebut was willing to depart to the realm of pure spiritsfor which that sight had prepared him. Now, will you try and picture Simeon taking up Christ that you may do the same? He no sooner saw Him than, asking nobodys leave, he lifted up the blessed Baby in his arms! That was a grasp of faith and its meaning was, He is mine! I take Him to be my salvation. For himself he embraced the Incarnate Lord and he was not ashamed to avow his faith in the courts of the Lords House in the midst of Jerusalem! It had been revealed to him that he should not see death until he had seen the Lords Christ and now he openly acknowledges that this was the Christ, the Consolation of Israel!

Dear Hearers, can you not put forth your arms, this morning, and take up my Lord to be your own forever? There is nobody to forbid youno, many are inviting you! Take Him, now, and be happy. Does your heart say, Yes, He shall be mine? Then delay not to claim Him! What a mercy it is that Jesus could be taken up in the arms and salvation thus be held in mens hands! He that in the beginning was with God and is, indeed, God Himself, nevertheless can be taken up in the arms of faith! A whole Christ can be held in an old mans feeble arms! O that other aged men would come and take Him! Yes, and young men and women, too! Would God that thousands of every age and sex would now confess the Lord Jesus to be their salvation! God help you so to do at once!

Simeon held that Baby in the grasp of love as well as of faith, for I am sure the old man pressed the Baby to his bosom and looked most fondly upon Him as he said, My eyes have seen Your salvation. He could not have held Him out at arms lengththat would have been impossible in such a casebut he felt that he at last saw the dearest Object of his desires and so he clasped Him to his bosom! Come, let us, one by one, do the same. My Jesus, my Salvation, You are all mine and I love You. The Heaven of heavens cannot contain You and yet I hold You! You fill all worlds and yet I have You, all my own, the beloved of my soul forever. What an armful that aged saint had obtained! Did ever human arms hold a burden more precious, a treasure more desirable? Come, then, Brothers and Sisters, and say, Christ shall be mine this morning, all mine and forever mine! By faith I take Him to be my very own. God help you, by His Holy Spirit, to give your Lord such an embrace.

While Simeon was thus holding the child in his arms, he gazed upon Him with intense delight. I know he did, for he said, My eyes have seen Your salvation. With what wondering pleasure and reverence he looked into that dear face and marked those altogether lovely features. Doubtless he looked and looked, and looked, and looked and looked again! He could scarcely bear to lift his eyes. So must you do with Christ. First, take Him to be yours and then let your eyes be riveted upon Him. Never let your thoughts forsake this choicest of all subjects for godly meditation! Think much of Him who is the whole of your salvation and embrace Him in that respect.

Alas, there are some Christians who never think of Jesus in that way. There is a certain creed which tells you you may be saved today and lost tomorrow! No Believer has obtained eternal salvation according to that theory, but only a temporary and possible salvation. On that theory there is no seeing the whole of Gods salvation as soon as you see Jesusyou only see a bare hope of it. But we know that whoever believes in Jesus is saved and, therefore, we assert that Christ is salvation and He that has Him is saved! Christs words are, I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. And he who knows the meaning of these words rejoices that he has the whole of salvation in his arms and he may look at it as long as he lives and never cease to look, for it is worthy of life-long admiration!

I like the thought of Simeon being an old man and taking the Infant Jesus in his arms. I have a hope that one of these days, by Gods mercy, this poor old world of ours, which has come to her dotage and decay, may be led, by Sovereign Grace, to embrace Jesus the ever new! Then will the Millennium dawn and the world may then pray for the last conflagration to end her sorrowful history, saying, Now let this globe depart in peace, for it has seen Your salvation. But, to drop all figurative speech, it is a great blessing to the aged man to have Jesus in his arms. Though he shall be compelled by the infirmities of age to ask with Barzillai, Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Yet he shall find great sweetness in the Bread of Heaven and the name of Jesus shall be as wine on the lees well refined. If, through age and infirmity, he can hear no more the voice of singing men and singing women, he that has Christ, has music in his heart forever!

In old age Solomon tells us that the grasshopper is a burden, but this Child is none. Then the sun, the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, but this Child gives light to all who see Him. Then the keepers of the house tremble, but they are strengthened as they hold the Lord! Then they that look out of the windows are darkened, but they are bright when they gaze upon the Savior. The doors are shut in the streets, but no door shuts out the Lord Jesus! The voice of the bird awakens the light sleeper, but no sound shall break the repose of those who rest in Jesus. With the aged, desire fails, but not with the aged saint, for he sees in Christ Jesus all his desires fulfilled! And though man goes to his long home, he that has the holy Child Jesus to go with him may even long for the journey, saying, Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace. Mourners may go about the streets of earth, but he who has seen in Christ the salvation of God ascends to other streets where sorrow and sighing are fled away. Thrice blessed old age which thus renews its youth with Christ Jesus!

III. That brings us to our last point, upon which we have no time for more than a few words. WHEN CHRIST IS TAKEN UP INTO THE ARMS AND LOOKED UPON, HE HAS A WONDERFUL EFFECT. Notice the case before us. First, waiting is ended. Simeon had been waiting for the consolation of Israel, but he could now say, Lord, what do I wait for? We, too, had been waiting, wishing, longing and piningbut when we found our Lord, we no longer waited, but we could each one sayI need nothing, I wish for nothing, I long for nothing, I pine for nothing. My eyes have seen Your salvation. Now, also, Simeon was excited to praise the Lord. He took Him up in his arms and blessed God. None can bless God like those who have Christ in their arms! I do not know that Simeon had ever been a poet before, but he began to pour out his swan song, his last, sweetest and, perhaps, his only hymn. Every line is full of exultation and delight!

Simeon soon had a song in his mouth when he had Christ in his arms! Then shall the tongue of the dumb sing! The very stones would cry out if a man could see Gods salvation and yet be silent. Those who could never speak six words before have grown eloquent when Christ Jesus has been their theme. He is my God and I will praise Him! He is my fathers God and I will extol Him. And now that he has seen the Lords Christ, notice the effect upon Simeons eyes. He desires to close them upon all else. I have heard of some who have looked on the sun unadvisedly till they could not see anything elsebut this I knowhe who looks on Christ becomes blind to all rival attractions! If these eyes have once seen the salvation of God, it looks like sacrilege to set them upon the base things of time and sense! Let the gate be closed through which Jesus has enteredit seems profane to allow a single object belonging to this traitorous world to enter our mind by eye-gate any more!

Having eaten the white bread of Heaven, we want no more of the husks of earth! Having had a glimpse of the Incarnate God, what more is there to see? Simeons eyes had seen Christ and what then? Why, now they were prepared to look on death! He had been told he should not see death till he had seen the Lords Christ and now he is ready to see his final hour and all of gloom which may attend his departure. He says, Lord, now let

Your servant depart. He regards it not as dying, but as going from the present scene to a more glorious country! If you have ever looked Christ in the face, the king of terrors has lost his terror and, instead of being a king, has become your servant! We may well long for the time when we shall have done with earth and be shut in with our Beloved! The proverb is, See Naples and die, but we may much improve upon it, and say, See Christ and never die, but be quite content to depart and to be with Him!

Lastly, that sight, of course, had made Simeons eyes ready to behold the Glory of God. I suppose if we could be taken up just as we are into Heavenif we were unrenewed men and womenwe should not be able to see the Glory of God for lack of spiritual eyes. We must first look at Christand when our eyes have been brightened and strengthened by the splendors of Incarnate Deity, they will be fitted to behold the King Himself as He sits upon His Throne! At any rate, when some of us have had a sight of Christ, we have wondered what more we could see in Heaven. When Solomons Song has come to be our everyday talk and the Beloved has made us to feel that His left hand is under our head while His right hand embraces us, we have almost thought we would not give a pin change earth for Heavenfor whether in the body or out of the body we could not tellbut this we knew, we could sing, My Beloved is mine and I am His. He feeds among the lilies.

If your soul once comes there and if the Lord helps you to continue there, then dying will be nothing more than crossing the threshold and going from the doorstep of the Kings palace to the interior of its halls! Some Believers dwell in the suburbs of the Celestial City and little will be their change when, in a little while, they shall enter the central golden streets where the sun shall no more go down, neither shall the Lord withdraw Himself! The Lord give you to find all your salvation in Christ! And may He teach you a great deal more than these poor stammering lips can ever tell you. May Christ Jesus our Lord be every day more near and dear to me and to you. To Him be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

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NUNC DIMITTIS   
NO. 1014

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING,JANUARY 15, 1871, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation. Luke 2:29, 30.**

Blessed were you, O Simeon, for flesh and blood had not revealed this to youneither had it enabled you so cheerfully to bid the world farewell. The flesh clings to the earthit is dust, and owes allegiance to the ground out of which it was taken. It loathes to part from mother earth. Even old age, with its infirmities, does not make men really willing to depart out of this world. By nature we hold to life with a terrible tenacityand even when we sigh over the evils of life, and repine concerning its ills, and fancy that we wish ourselves away, it is probable that our readiness to depart lies only upon the surfacedown deep in our hearts we have no will to go.

Flesh and blood had not revealed to Simeon that he saw Gods salvation in that Babe which he took out of the arms of Mary and embraced with eager joy. Gods Grace had taught him that this was the Savior, and Gods Grace at the same time loosened the cords which bound him to earth and made him feel the attractions of the better land. Blessed is that man who has received from Divine Grace a meekness for Heaven and a willingness to depart to that better landlet him magnify the Lord who has worked so great a work in him!

As Paul says, Thanks be unto the Father who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Certainly none of us were meet by naturenot even Simeonthe fitness of the venerable man was all the handiwork of God, and so, also, was his anxiety to obtain the inheritance for which God had prepared him. I trust, Brethren, while we consider this morning the preparedness of the saints for Heaven, and turn over in our mind those reflections which will make us ready to depart, Gods Holy Spirit, sent forth from the Father, may make us also willing to leave these mortal shores, and launch upon the eternal sea at the bidding of our Father God.

We shall note, this morning, first, that every Believer may be assured of departing in peace. But that, secondly, some Believers feel a special readiness to depart nowNow let You Your servant depart in peace. And, thirdly, that there are words of encouragement to produce in us the like readinessaccording to Your Word. There are words of Holy Writ which afford richest consolation in prospect of departure.

I. First, then, let us start with the great general principle which is full of comfort, namely, this, that EVERY BELIEVER MAY BE ASSURED OF ULTIMATELY DEPARTING IN PEACE. This is no privilege peculiar to

Simeon. It is common to all the saints, since the grounds upon which this privilege rests are not monopolized by Simeon, but belong to us all. Observe, first, that all the saints have seen Gods salvation, therefore, they should all depart in peace. It is true, we cannot take up the infant Christ into our arms, but He is formed in us, the hope of Glory.

It is true, we cannot look upon Him with these mortal eyes, but we have seen Him with those eyes immortal which death cannot dimthe eyes of our own spirit which have been opened by Gods Holy Spirit. A sight of Christ with the natural eye is not saving, for thousands saw Him and then cried, Crucify Him, crucify Him. After all, it was in Simeons case the spiritual eye that saw, the eye of faith that truly beheld the Christ of God. For there were others in the temple who saw the Babe.

There was the priest who performed the act of circumcision and the other officials who gathered round the group. But I do not know that any of them saw Gods salvation. They saw the little innocent Child that was brought there by its parents, but they saw nothing remarkable in Him. Perhaps Simeon and Anna, alone, of all those who were in the temple, saw with the inward eye the real Anointed of God revealed as a feeble Infant. So, though you and I miss the outward sight of Christ, we need not regret itit is but secondary as a privilege. If with the inner sight we have seen the Incarnate God, and accepted Him as our salvation, we are blessed with holy Simeon.

Abraham saw Christs day before it dawned, and even thus, after it has passed, we see it! And with faithful Abraham we are glad. We have looked unto Him, and we are lightened. We have beheld the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world. In the despised and rejected of men we have seen the anointed Savior. In the crucified and buried One, who afterwards rose again, and ascended into Glory we have seen salvation full, free, finished. Why, therefore, should we think ourselves less favored than Simeon? From like causes like results shall springwe shall depart in peacefor we have seen Gods salvation.

Moreover, Believers already enjoy peace as much as ever Simeon did. No man can depart in peace who has not lived in peace. But he who has attained peace in life shall possess peace in death, and an eternity of peace after death. Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus has bequeathed us peace, saying, Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. For He is our peace, and, the fruit of the Spirit is peace. We are reconciled unto God by the death of His Son. Whatever peace flowed in the heart of Simeon, I am sure it was not of a more Divine nature than that which dwells in the bosom of every true Believer. If sin is pardoned, the quarrel is ended. If the Atonement is made, then is peace establisheda peace covenanted to endure forever.

We are now led in the paths of peace. We walk the Kings highway, of which it is written, no lion shall be there. We are led beside the still waters, and made to lie down in green pastures. We feel no slavish fear of God, though He is a consuming fire even to us. We tremble no longer to approach into His Presence, who deigns to be our Father. The precious blood upon the Mercy Seat has made it a safe place for us to resort at all times. Boldness has taken the place of trembling. The Throne of God is our rejoicing, though once it was our terror

*Once twas a seat of dreadful wrath,   
And shot devouring flames.   
Our God appeared a consuming fire,   
And vengeance was His name.*

Therefore, Brethren, having peace with God, we may be sure that we shall depart in peace. We need not fear that the God of all consolation, who has already enriched us in communion with Himself, and peace in Christ Jesus, will desert us at the last. He will help us to sing a sweet swan song, and our tabernacle shall be gently taken down, to be rebuilt more enduringly in the fair country beyond Jordan.

Furthermore, we may rest assured of the same peace as that which Simeon possessed, since we are, if true Believers, equally Gods servants. The text says, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace. But, in this case, one servant cannot claim a privilege above the rest of the household. The same position towards God, the same reward from God. Simeon, a servant. You also, my Brothers and Sisters, a servant. He who says to Simeon, depart in peace, will say also the same to you!

The Lord is always very considerate towards his old servants and takes care of them when their strength fails. The Amalekite of old had a servant who was an Egyptian, and when he fell sick he left him. He would have perished if David had not had compassion on him. But our God is no Amalekite slave owner. Neither does He cast off His worn-out servants. 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.

David felt this, for he prayed to God, and said, Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not. If you have been clothed in your Lords livery of Grace, and taught to obey His will, He will never leave you, nor forsake you. He will not sell you into the hands of your adversary, nor suffer your soul to perish. A true master counts it a part of his duty to protect his servants, and our great Lord and Prince will show Himself strong on behalf of the very least of all His followers, and will bring them, every one, into the rest which remains for His people.

Do you really serve God? Remember, his servants you are to whom you obey. Are you taught of the Spirit to obey the Commandments of love? Do you strive to walk in holiness? If so, do not fear death! It shall have no terrors to you. All the servants of God shall depart in peace. There is also another reflection which strengthens our conviction that all Believers shall depart in peace, namely thisthat up till now all things in their experience have been according to Gods Word. Simeons basis of hope for a peaceful departure was according to Your Word. And, surely, no Scripture is of private interpretation, or to be reserved for one Believer to the exclusion of the rest!

The promises of God, which are, Yes and amen in Christ Jesus, are sure to all the seednot to some of the children is the promise madebut all the Grace-born are heirs. There are not special promises hedged round and set apart for Simeon and a few saints of old timebut with all who are in Christ, their federal Head, the Covenant is madeand stands ordered in all things and sure. If, then, Simeon, as a Believer in the Lord,

had a promise that he should depart in peace, I also have a like promise if I am in Christ.

What God has said in His Word Simeon lays hold of, and none can tell him not to. But if, with the same Grace-given faith, I also grasp it for myself, who shall challenge my right? God will not violate His promise to one of His people any more than to another, and consequently, when our turn shall come to gather up our feet in the bed and to resign our spirit, some precious passage in sacred writ shall be as a rod and a staff to us that we may fear no evil. These four considerations, gathered out of the text itself, may give fourfold certainty to the assurance that every Believer, at the hour of his departure, shall possess peace.

For a moment, review attentively the words of the aged saintthey have much instruction in them. Every Believer shall in death depart in the same sense as Simeon did. The word here used is suggestive and encouragingit may be applied either to escape from confinement, or to deliverance from toil. The Christian man in the present state is like a bird in a cagehis body imprisons his soul. His spirit, it is true, ranges Heaven and earth, and laughs at the limits of matter, space, and time. But for all that, the flesh is a poor scabbard unworthy of the glittering soul, a mean cottage unfit for a princely spirit, a clog, a burden, and a fetter.

When we would watch and pray, we find, full often, that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. We that are in this body do groan. The fact is, we are caged birds. But the day comes when the great Master shall open the cage door and release His prisoners! We need not dread the act of unfastening the door, for it will give to our soul the liberty for which it only pines. And then, with the wings of a dove covered with silver, and its feathers with yellow goldthough aforetime it had a lien among the pots it will soar into its native air, singing all the way with a rapture beyond imagination!

Simeon looked upon dying as a mode of being let loosea deliverance out of durance vile, an escape from captivity, a release from bondage. The like redemption shall be dealt unto us. How often does my soul feel like an unhatched chick shut up within a narrow shell in darkness and discomfort! The life within labors hard to chip and break the shell, to know a little more of the great universe of Truth, and see in clearer light the Infinite of Divine love. Oh, happy day when the shell shall be broken, and the soul, complete in the image of Christ, shall enter into the freedom for which she is preparing!

We look for that, and we shall have it. God, who gave us to aspire to holiness and spirituality and likeness to Himself, never implanted those aspirations in us out of mockery. He meant to gratify these holy longings, or else He would not have excited them. Before long we, like Simeon, shall departthat is, we shall be set free to go in peace. I said that the word meant also a release from toil. It is as though Simeon had been standing at the table of his Master like a servant waiting on his Lord.

You know the parable in which Christ says that the master does not first bid his servant sit down and eat bread, but commands him thus, Gird yourself and serve me. See then, Simeon stands yonder, girt and serving his Master. But by-and-by, when the Master sees fit, He turns round and says to Simeon, Now you may depart and take your own meat, your work is done. Or, we may use another simile, and picture Simeon sitting at the Kings gate, like Mordecai, ready for any errand which may be appointed him. But at length his time of attendance expires and the great monarch bids him depart in peace. Or, yet again, we may view him as a reaper toiling amid the harvest beneath a burning sun, parched with thirst and wearied with labor, and lo, the great Boaz comes into the field, and, having saluted his servant, says to him, You have fulfilled like an hireling your day: take you your wage, and depart in peace.

The like shall happen to all true servants of Christ. They shall rest from their labors where no weariness shall vex them, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. They shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and enjoy the rest which remains for them. There is much of comfortable thought if we meditate upon this. But, note the words again. You perceive that the departure of the child of God is appointed of the Lord. Now let You Your servant depart. The servant must not depart from his labor without his Masters permission, else would he be a runaway, dishonest to his position. The good servant dares not stir till his Master says, Depart in peace.

Simeon was content to wait till he received permission to depart, and it becomes us all to acquiesce cheerfully in the Lords appointment, whether He lengthens or shortens our life. It is certain that without the Lords will no power can remove us. No wind from the wilderness shall drive our souls into the land of darkness. No fiends with horrid clamor can drag us down to the abyss beneath. No destruction that is wasting at noonday, or pestilence waiting in darkness, can cut short our mortal career. We shall not die till God shall say to us, My child, depart from the field of service, and the straitness of this, your tabernacle, and enter into rest.

Till God commands us, we cannot die, and when He bids us go, it shall be sweet for us to leave this world. Note, further, that the words before us clearly show that the Believers departure is attended with a renewal of this Divine benediction. Depart in peace, says God. It is a farewell such as we give to a friendit is a benediction such as Aaron, the priest of God, might pronounce over a suppliant whose sacrifice was accepted. Eli said unto Hannah, Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant you your petition that you have asked of Him.

Around the sinners deathbed the tempest thickens and he hears the rumblings of the eternal stormhis soul is driven awayeither amid the thunder of curses, loud and deep, or else in the dread calm which evermore forebodes the hurricane. Depart, you cursed, is the horrible sound which is in his ears. But, not so the righteous. He feels the Fathers hand of benediction on his head, and underneath him are the everlasting arms! The best wine with him is kept to the last. At eventide it is light. And, as his sun is going down, it grows more glorious, and lights up all the surroundings with a celestial glow, where bystanders wonder, and exclaim, Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.

That pilgrim sets out upon a happy journey to whom Jehovah says,

Depart in peace. This is a sole finger laid upon the closing eyelid by a tender father, and it ensures a happy waking, where eyes are never wet with tears. I cannot detain you longer over these wordssuffice it to add that whatever belonged to Simeon in this benediction must not be regarded as peculiar to him, alone, but as, in their measure, the possession of all Believers. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their

righteousness is of Me, says the Lord.   
II. But now, secondly, we remind you that SOME BELIEVERS ARE   
CONSCIOUS OF A SPECIAL READINESS TO DEPART IN PEACE. When do  
they feel this? Answerfirst, when their Graces are vigorous. All the   
Graces are in all Christians, but they are not all there in the same proportion, nor are they at all times in the same degree of strength. In certain  
Believers faith is strong and active. Now, when faith becomes the evidence of things not seen, and, the substance of things hoped for, then  
the soul is sure to say, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace. Faith brings the clusters of Eshcol into the desert and makes the tribes   
long for the land that flows with milk and honey. When the old Gauls had  
drunk of the wines of Italy, they said, Let us cross the Alps and take possession of the vineyards, which yield such generous draughts. So, when  
faith makes us realize the joys of Heaven, then it is that our soul stands   
waiting on the wing, watching for the signal from the Glory land. The same is true of the Grace of hope, for Hope peers into the things   
invisible. She brings near to us the golden gates of the Eternal City. Like   
Moses, our hope climbs to the top of Pisgah, and beholds the Canaan of   
the true Israel. Moses had a delightful vision of the promised land when  
he gazed from Nebos brow, and saw it all from Dan to Beershebaso also   
Hope drinks in the charming prospect of the goodly land and Lebanon,  
and then she exclaims exultingly, Lord, now let You Your servant depart  
in peace.   
Heaven realized and anticipated by hope renders the thought of departure most precious to the heart. And the like, also, is the effect of the   
Grace of love upon us. Love puts the heart, like a sacrifice, on the altar,   
and then she fetches heavenly fire, and kindles it. And, as soon as ever   
the heart begins to burn and glow like a sacrifice, what is the consequence? Why, it ascends like pillars of smoke up to the Throne of God. It   
is the very instinct of Love to draw us nearer to the person whom we love.  
And, when love towards God pervades the soul, then the spirit cries,  
Make haste, my Beloved, be You like a roe or a young hart upon the   
mountains of separation. Perfect Love, casting out all fear, cries, Up, and

away. *Let me be with You where You are,   
My Savior my eternal rest!   
Then only will this longing heart   
Be fully and forever blessed.*

I might thus mention all the Graces, but suffer one of them to suffice! One which is often overlooked, but is priceless as the gold of Ophirit is the Grace of humility. Is it strange that the lower a man sinks in his own esteem the higher does he rise before his God? Is it not written, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven? Simeon had no conceit of his own importance in the world, else he would have said, Lord, let me stay, and be an Apostle. Surely I shall be needed at this juncture to lend my aid in the auspicious era which has just commenced?

But no, he felt himself so little, so inconsiderable, that now that he had attained his hearts wish and seen Gods salvation, he was willing to depart in peace. Humility, by making us lie low helps us to think highly of God, and, consequently, to desire much to be with God. O to have our Graces always flourishing, for then shall we always be ready to depart, and willing to be offered up! Lack of Grace entangles usbut to abound in Divine Grace is to live in the suburbs of the New Jerusalem.

Another time, when Believers are thus ready to go, is when their assurance is clear. It is not always so with even the most mature Christians, and some true saints have not yet attained to assurance. They are truly saved, and possess a genuine faith, but as assurance is the cream of faith, the milk has not stood long enough to produce the cream. They have not yet come to the flower of assurance, for their faith is but a tender plant. Give a man assurance of Heaven and he will be eager to enjoy it!

While he doubts his own security, he wants to linger here. He is like the Psalmist when he asked that God would permit him to recover his strength before he went from here and was no more. Some things were not yet in order with David, and he would stay awhile till they were. But, when the ship is all loaded, the crew on board, and the anchor heaved, the favoring breeze is desired that the boat may speed on its voyage. When a man is prepared for his journey, ready to depart, he does not care to linger long in these misty valleys, but pants for the sunny summits of the mount of God whereon stands the palace of the Great King.

Let a man know that he is resting upon the precious blood of Christ. Let him by diligent self-examination perceive in himself the marks of regeneration. And by the witness of his own spirit and the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with his own spirit, let him be certified that he is born of God, and the natural consequence will be that he will say, Now let me loose from all things here below and let me enter into the rest which is assuredly my own. O you that have lost your assurance by negligent living, by falling into sin, or by some other form of backsliding, I do not wonder that you hug the worldfor you are afraid you have no other portion!

But with those who read their titles clear to mansions in the skies it will be otherwise. They will not ask to linger in this place of banishment, but will sing in their hearts, as we did just now

*Jerusalem my happy home,   
Name ever dear to me!   
When shall my labors have an end,   
In joy and peace and you?*

Beloved, saints feel most their readiness to go when their communion with Christ is near and sweet. When Christ hides Himself we are afraid to talk of dying, or of Heaven. But when He only shows Himself through the lattices, and we can see those eyes which are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, washed with milk and fitly set. When our own soul melts even at that hazy sight of Him, as through a glass darkly. Oh then we gladly would be at Home, and our soul cries out for the day when her

eyes shall see the King in His beauty, in the land that is very far off.

Have you never felt the heavenly homesickness? Have you never pined for the home-bringing? Surely, when your heart has been full of the Bridegrooms beauty, and your soul has been ravished with His dear and ever precious love, you have saidWhen shall the day break, and the shadows flee away? Why are His chariots so long in coming? You have swooned, as it were, with love-sickness for your precious Savior, thirsting to see Him as He is, and to be like He. The world is black when Christ is fair. It is a poor heap of ashes when He is altogether lovely to us. When a precious Christ is manifested to our spirits, we feel that we could see Jesus and die.

Put out these eyes, there is nothing more for them to see when they have seen HIM. Black sun, said Rutherford, black moon, black stars, but inconceivably bright and glorious Lord Jesus. How often did that devout man write words of this sortOh if I had to swim through seven Hells to reach Him, if He would but say to me, like Peter, Come unto Me, I would go unto Him not only on the sea, but on the boiling floods of Hell, if I might but reach Him, and come to Him. I will pause here and give you his own words

I profess to you I have no rest, I have no ease, till I am over head and ears in loves ocean. If Christs love (that fountain of delight) were laid as open to me as I would wish, oh, how I would drink, and drink abundantly! I half call His absence cruel. And the mask and veil on Christs face a cruel covering that hides such a fair, fair face from a sick soul. I dare not upbraid Him, but His absence is a mountain of iron upon my heavy heart. Oh, when shall we meet? Oh, how long is it to the dawning of the marriage day? O sweet Lord Jesus, take wide steps. O my Lord, come over the mountains at one stride! O my Beloved, be like a roe, or a young hart on the mountains of separation. Oh, if He would fold the heavens together like an old cloak, and shovel time and days out of the way, and make ready in haste the Lambs wife for her Husband! Since He looked upon me my heart is not mine. He has run away to Heaven with it.

When these strong throes, these ardent pangs of insatiable desire come upon a soul that is fully saturated with Christs love through having been made to lean its head upon His bosom, and to receive the kisses of His mouththen is the time when the soul saysLord, now let You Your servant depart in peace.

So again, Beloved, saints have drawn their anchor up and spread their sails when they have been made to hold loosely all there is in this world. And that is generally when they hold fastest to the world to come. To many this world is very sweet, very fair, but God puts bitters into the cup of His children. When their nest is soft, He fills it with thorns to make them long to fly. Alas, that it should be so, but some of Gods servants seem as if they had made up their minds to find a rest beneath the moon! They are moon-struck who hope to do so. All the houses in this plaguestricken land are worm-eaten and let in the rain and windmy soul longs to find a rest among the ivory palaces of Your land, O Immanuel! Brethren, it often happens that the loss of dear friends, or the treachery of those we trusted, or bodily sickness, or depression of spirit may help to unloose the holdfasts which enchain us to this life. And then we are enabled to say with David in one of the most precious little Psalms in the whole Book, the 131st, I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother, my soul is even as a weaned child. I have often thought that if David had said, my soul is even as a weaning child, it would have been far more like most of Gods people. But to be weaned, quite weaned from the world, to turn away from her consolations altogetherthis it is which makes us cry, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace. Even as the Psalmist, when he said, And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in You.

Again, saints are willing to depart when their work is almost done. This will not be the case with many here present, perhaps, but it was so with Simeon. Good old man! He had been very constant in his devotions, but on this occasion he came into the temple, and there, it is said, he took the Child in his arms and blessed God. Once more he delivered his soul of its adorationonce more he blended his praise with the songs of angels. When he had done that, he openly confessed his faithanother important work of every Believerfor he said, My eyes have seen Your salvation. He bore public testimony to the Child Jesus, and declared that He should be a light to lighten the Gentiles.

Having done that, he bestowed his fatherly benediction upon the Childs parents, Joseph and His mother. He blessed them, and said unto Mary, Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. Now, we read that David, after he had served his generation, fell on sleep. It is time for man to sleep when his lifes work is finished. Simeon felt he had done allhe had blessed God. He had declared his faith. He had borne testimony to Christ. He had bestowed his benediction upon godly people. And so he said, Now, Lord, let You Your servant depart in peace.

Ah, Christian people, you will never be willing to go if you are idle. You lazy lie-a-beds, who do little or nothing for Christ! You sluggish servants, whose garden is overgrown with weeds! No wonder that you do not want to see your Master! Your sluggishness accuses you, and makes you cowards. Only he who has put out his talents to good interest will be willing to render an account of his stewardship. But when a man feels, without claiming any merit, that he has fought a good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith, then will he rejoice in the crown which is laid up for him in Heaven, and he will long to wear it!

Throw your strength into the Lords work, dear Brothers and Sisters all your strength! Spare none of your powerslet body, soul, and spirit be entirely consecrated to God and used at their utmost stretch. Get through your days work, for the sooner you complete it, and have fulfilled like an hireling your day, the more near and sweet shall be the time when the shadows lengthen, and God shall say to you, as a faithful servant, Depart in peace! One other matter, I think, helps to make saints willing to go, and that is when they see or foresee the prosperity of the Church of God.

Good old Simeon saw that Christ was to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the Glory of His people Israel. And therefore, he said, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace. I have known many a godly deacon who has seen a Church wither and decay, its ministry become unprofitable, and its membership become divided. The dear old man has poured out his soul in agony before God, and when at last the Lord has sent a man to seek the good of Israel, and the Church has been built up, he has been overjoyed, and he has said, now let You Your servant depart in peace.

It must have reconciled John Knox to die when he had seen the Reformation safely planted throughout all Scotland. It made dear old Latimer, as he stood on the firewood, feel happy when he could say, Courage, Brother, we shall this day light such a candle in England as shall never be blown out. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, Yes, that we do, and we vehemently desire her prosperity! And if we can see Christ glorified, error defeated, the Truth of God established, sinners saved, and saints sanctified, our spirit feels she has all she wishes!

Like dying David, when we have said, Let the whole earth be filled with His glory, we can fall back upon the pillows and die, for our prayers, like those of David, the son of Jesse, are ended. Let us pray for this peace and this prosperity, and when we see it come, it shall bring calm and rest to our spirits so that we shall be willing to depart in peace.

III. I shall call your attention now, for a little while, to the third point that THERE ARE WORDS TO ENCOURAGE US TO THE LIKE READINESS TO DEPART. According to Your Word. Now let us go to the Bible and take from it seven choice Wordsall calculated to cheer our hearts in the prospect of departure. The first is Psalm 23:4Yes, 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. We walkthe Christian does not quicken his pace when he dies. He walked before, and he is not afraid of death, so he calmly walks on. It is a walk through a shadow. There is no substance in death, it is only a shade. Who needs fear a shadow?

It is not a lonely walkYou are with me. Neither is it a walk that need cause us terror. I will fear no evil not only is there no evil, but no fear shall cloud my dying hours. It shall be a departure full of comfortYour rod and Your staffa duplicate means shall give us a fullness of consolation. Your rod and Your staff they comfort me. Take another text, and so follow the direction, According to your Word. Psalm 37:37Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. If we are perfect, that is, sincere. If we are upright, that is, honest in heart. Our end, then, assuredly is peace.

Take another Word, Psalm 116:15Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. It is no ordinary thing for a saint to die. It is a spectacle which the eyes of God are delighted with! As kings delight in their pearls and diamonds, and count them precious, so the deathbeds of the saints are Gods precious things. Take another, Isaiah 57:2He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness. Here is an entrance into peace for the saintrest on his dying bed, rest for his body in the grave, rest for his spirit in the bosom of his Lord, and a walking in his uprightness in the immortality above! According to Your Word.

Oh, what force there is in these few syllables! When you can preach the Word of God you must prevail. Nothing has such marrow and fatness in it as a text of Scripture. It has a force of comfort all its own. Consider also 1 Corinthians 3:22For all things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come. All are yours. Now, if death is yours, there can be no sort of reason why you should be afraid of that which is made over to you as a part of your inheritance.

Take the fifteenth chapter and fifty-fourth verse of the same Epistle So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin. And the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

With such a text we need not fear to depart. And so that other Word, the seventh we shall quote, and in that number seven dwells perfection of testimony. Revelation 4:13And I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from now on: yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors. And their works do follow them. Now, I dare say, many of you have said, I wish I had a Word from God, just like Simeon had, to cheer me in my dying moments. You have it before youhere are seven that I have read to you, most sure Words of Testimony, unto which you do well to take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place. These promises belong to all Believers in our precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Fear not, then, be not afraid, but rather say, Now let You Your servant depart in peace.

I have done the sermon, but we must put a rider to it. Just a word or two to those of you who cannot die in peace because you are not Believers in Christyou have never seen Gods salvation, neither are you Gods servants. I must deal with you as I have dealt with the saints. I have given them texts of Scripture, for the text says, according to Your Word. And I will give you also two passages of Scripture, which will show you those who may not hope to depart in peace.

The first one is negativeit shows who cannot enter Heaven, and, consequently, who cannot depart in peace. 1 Corinthians 6:9Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? The unjust, the oppressive, cheats, rogues, the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. I will read these words. I need not explain them, but let everyone here who comes under their lash submit to Gods Word. Be not deceived: neither fornicatorsplenty of them in Londonnor idolatersand you need not worship a god of wood and stone to be idolaters. Worship anything but God and you are an idolater.

Nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkardsalas, some of these come to this house regularlynor revilers, that is, backbiters, cavilers, talebearers, swearers and such like, nor extortionersyou fine twentypercent gentlemen! You who grind poor borrowers with usurious interest. None of you shall inherit the kingdom of God, not one of you! If you come within this list, except God renew your hearts and change you, the holy gates of Heaven are shut in your face!

Now, take another text, of a positive character, from the Book of Revelation 21:7He that overcomes shall inherit all things. And I will be his God, and he shall be My son. But the fearful,that means the cowardly, those that are ashamed of Christ, those that dare not suffer for Christs sake, those who believe everything, and nothing, and so deny the Truth because they cannot endure to be persecutedthe fearful and unbelievingthat is those who do not trust a Saviorand the abominableand they are not scarce, some among the poor are abominable, and there are Right Honorables who ought to be called Right Abominablesyes, and greater than that, too, whose vices make them abominable to the nation!

And murderershe that hates his brother is a murderer. And whoremongers and sorcerersthose who have or pretend to have dealings with devils and spirits, your spirit rappers, the whole batch of them and idolaters, and all liars, and these swarm everywhere, they lie in print, and they lie with the voiceall liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

Now, these are not words of mine, but the Words of God. And if they condemn you, you are condemned! But, if you are condemned, fly to Jesus! Repent and be converted, as says the Gospel, and forgiveness shall be yours, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON Luke 1:46-55; 1:67-75; 2:25-35.

Our usual Penny Almanac is now ready, and we hope it will be as much approved of as its predecessors have been. We have also, with no small labor, written an Almanac for the walls, which is called John Ploughmans Sheet Almanac. Our friends tells us that it will have an unprecedented sale, and we only hope it may, but not to the detriment of the older one. They are quite distinct things, and very different in all respects, except that they are by the same author, cost the same priceone pennyand can be had of the same publishers, Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster. C.H.S.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2293 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SIMEONS SWAN SONG   
NO. 2293

**INTENDED FOR READING, ON LORDS-DAY, JANUARY 29, 1893. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation.   
Luke 2:29, 30.**

IF we are believers in Christ, we shall one day use words like these. Perhaps not just at present and yet, possibly, sooner than some of us think, we shall gather up our feet in our bed and we shall say with all composure, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word.

See what death is to the Believer. It is only a departure! It is a departure after a day of service. Lord, now let You Your servant depart. My days work is done. Let me now go Home. With us who believe it will be a departure to a higher service, for we shall still be the Lords servants even when we depart from this present sphere of labor. We shall go to do yet higher and more perfect work in the nearer Presence of our Master. His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face. Death to the Believer is only a departure from one form of service to another.

And, note, that it is a departing in peace. We are at peace with God. We have   
*Peace! Perfect peace! In this dark world of sin, The blood of Jesus whispers peace within!*

As many as have believed in Jesus, have entered into rest. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God. We have joy and peace in believing and, as we live in peace, we shall also die in peace. We shall remain in peace and we shall depart in peace. A deep and holy calm will fill up our dying moments

*It is enough: earths struggles soon shall cease,*

*And Jesus call to Heavens perfect peace!* We shall be able to say, perhaps, when we come to die, what a dear friend of mine once said to me, when I went in to see him on his dying bed. A part of his affliction consisted in total blindness from what they call the breaking of the eye-strings. Sitting up, although he could not see me, he moved his hand and said

*And when you see my eye-strings break,   
How sweet my minutes roll!   
A mortal paleness on my cheek,   
But glory in my soul!*

So will it be with uswe shall depart in peace. To the Believer, death is not a thing to be dreadedhe even asks for it, Lord, now let You, permit You, Your servant to depart in peace. Grant it as a gift, vouchsafe it as a favor. Death to the sinner is a curse, but to the Believer it is a form of benediction, it is the gate of life. To the sinner, it is a chain dragging him down to the unutterable darkness of Hell, but to the saint, it is a chariot of fire bearing him aloft to the Heaven of light and love!

Note, also, that Simeon said, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word. Did you not notice, in our reading, what Luke says about Simeon in the 26th verse? It was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lords Christ. The prophecy had been fulfilled! He had seen the Lords Anointed. There was nothing more for him to desire upon earth, so he said, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation. The reason for Simeons holy calm, the cause of his finding death to be nothing but a departure out of this world, lies in this fact, that he could say, My eyes have seen Your salvation. It is of that blessed fact that I am going to talk tonight as the Spirit shall help me.

I do not suppose that everybody here can say, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace. Some of you would not depart in peace if death came to you as you now are. Dear Friend, if you are not prepared for death and judgment, you had better pray, Lord, let me stay here till I have found peace with You; and then let me depart in peace whenever You will.

I shall at this time take the innermost sense of the text, dwelling upon these words of Simeon, My eyes have seen Your salvation. There were others who had seen the Baby Christ with their natural eyes, but Simeon had seen, in the Babe, Christ, the salvation of God, not with his outward eyes, but with the inward perceptions of his spirit! I hope that many here present can say that they have seen, and do see, in Christ, Gods salvation, and their salvation given to them of God. If so, I am sure that they feel ready to live, or ready to die. But if it is not so with any of youif you cannot say, My eyes have seen Your salvation, you cannot pray, Lord, let Your servant depart in peace.

What, then, do these words mean, My eyes have seen Your salvation? I will try to explain their meaning in my discourse tonight and, when I have finished, I think you will see that there are these five things included in this utterance of old Simeon. First, here is clear perception. Next, perfect satisfaction. Then, happy unbinding. Then, dauntless courage. And finally, joyful appropriation.

I. The first thing for us to notice in Simeons swan song is CLEAR PERCEPTIONMy eyes have seen Your salvation.   
Some people are very hazy in their religionthey see men as trees walking. They see things as we see them in London in a fog. That is to say, we do not see them clearly; we cannot see them distinctly; and yet we do see them after a fashion. The fault with a great many Christians, nowadays, is that they have only just light enough to see things as in a mistthey have not discerned clearly the sharply-cut image of the Truth of God. But Simeon could say, not, I think I see the salvation of God in Christ. I hope I do. Perhaps I dohe could say, My eyes have seen Your salvation. Oh, happy are you, my dear Friends, tonight, if you can distinctly and clearly see in Christ Jesus, the salvation of God!   
True, Christ was but a Baby then. And Simeon could easily hold Him in his arms, yet his faith could see everlasting salvation, infinite salvation within God Incarnate! God has come into our world and has taken upon Himself our nature. He that was born at Bethlehem was very God of very God. He that trod the acres of Palestine, as He went about doing good, was the same who was in the beginning with God, without whom was not anything made that was made. Christ is God. The Word was with God, and the Word was God, but it is equally true that The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.   
*It is my sweetest comfort, Lord,   
And will forever be,   
To muse upon the gracious truth   
Of Your Humanity.   
Forever God, forever Man,   
My Jesus shall endure.   
And fixed on Him, my hope remains   
Eternally secure.*   
Now, this Christ took upon Himself the sins of all His people. Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree. The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. And sin, being laid on Christ, it remained no more on those from whom He took it! He bore it that they might not bear it! He suffered the consequences of their sin that they might never suffer those consequences! Jesus made an Atonement to the Justice of GodHe vindicated and honored the perfect Law of the Most High. When I see Christ on the Cross, Christ in the tomb, Christ risen from the dead, Christ at the right hand of God, I understand that He took away my sin. He died. He was buried. He came forth from the grave, having destroyed my sin and put it awayand He has gone into the heavens as my Representative, to take possession of the right hand of God for me, that I in Him and with Him may sit there forever and ever!   
To me, Christs Sacrifice is a business transaction as clear and straight as mathematics could make it. I care not that men decry what they call the mercantile theory of the Atonement. I hold no theory of the Atonement! I believe that the Substitution of Christ for His people is the Atonement for their sins. And that there is no other Atonementbut that all else is theory! This is to me so clear, so true, so definite, that I can venture to say with Simeon, when I have seen Christ, especially Christ crucified, Christ glorified, My eyes have seen Your salvation. Clear perception, then, is the first meaning of Simeons words.   
You young people who have come to believe in Christ, get clear perceptions as to how Christ is Gods salvation. Do not mix and muddle things up, as so many do, but accept Christ as your Substitute, as the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. Believe that on the Cross He paid your debt, discharged your liabilityand bought you with a priceso that you are His, and His forever and ever. You will never have peace in deathI do not see how you are to have solid rest in lifewithout a sharp, crisp, clearly-cut idea of how Christ is the salvation of God! The bulk of people do not see it and they, therefore, miss the comfort of it. The comfort of a man, immersed in debt, is assured if he has a friend who bears his burden and pays his debt for himthen he feels that he is clear of all his former liabilities. I declare, before the living God, that I know of no solid comfort for my heart, tonight, but thisthe chastisement of my peace was upon Him, and with His stripes I am healed! May you get a clear perception of this great Truth of God, now!   
II. But, next, when Simeon could say, My eyes have seen Your salvation, he had PERFECT SATISFACTION in Christ.   
You observe, he takes Christ up in his arms, and says, My eyes have seen, not, a part of Your salvation, but Your salvation. He is not looking to anything else for salvation, but only to that Man-Child, seeing all that that Man-Child will do, and bear, and sufferrecognizing in Him the two Natures, the Divine and the Humanand as he clasps Him to his breast, he says, My eyes have seen Your salvation. It is enough, I have here all that I need. Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation.   
Beloved Friends, have you ever done with Christ what old Simeon did? He took Him up in his arms, and blessed God. All that you need to save you, lies in Him! I have known the Lord, now, for some 40 years, or thereabouts. When I first came to Him, I came as a sinner, without any works of my own which I could trust, or any experience upon which I could rely. And I just rested my whole weight upon the finished work of Christ. Now, after 40 years of service, and nearly 40 years of preaching the Gospel, have I any works of my own to add to what Christ has done? I abhor the thought of such a thing! Have I even the weight of a pins head that I dare put into the scale with my Lords merits? Accursed be the idea! More than ever do I sing   
*Nothing save Jesus would I know,*   
and nowhere would I rest but in Him alone!   
Now, dear Christian Friends, I know you understand this, that Christ is an all-sufficient Savior, that He is all your salvation and all your desire. And yet, perhaps, you are tempted at times to think that you must be this, or you must do that, or you must feel the other, or else Christ is of no effect to you. Think not so, but rest wholly and alone on Christ! Say, I rest in Him, whether I am a saint or a sinner; whether I have bright frames or dark frames; whether I am useful, or whether I am defeated in my service, I have no more to trust in when I rejoice in the Light of Gods Countenance than I have when I walk in darkness, and see no light. Christ is everything to me at all timesa winter Christ and a summer Christall my Light when I have no other, and all my Light when I have every other light.   
*My hope is built on nothing less   
Than Jesus blood and righteousness!   
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,   
But wholly lean on Jesus name!   
On Christ the solid Rock I stand,   
All other ground is sinking sand!*   
God bring you to this, that you may say, I have seen Christ, my eyes have seen Gods salvation. I am perfectly satisfied. I need nothing else. Does a man pluck me by the sleeve, and say, I will tell you something worth hearing? My good Fellow, go and tell it to somebody who wants to hear it, for I do not! I have heard all the news I need when I have heard of eternal salvation by Jesus Christ!   
III. Now, thirdly, notice that there is in Simeons words, My eyes have seen Your salvation, a kind of HAPPY UNBINDING. The man has been, as it were, bound. But He says, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace. Every fetter is now broken. I have seen Your salvation, Lord, I am not tied to life, nor tied to home, nor tied to comfort, nor tied even to Your Temple. Now, Lord, I can go anywhere, departing in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation.   
Is not that a grand utterance of old Simeon? The most of us are tied in one way or another and we find it hard to cut ourselves loose. With many of us, the first part of our life is often spent in tying ourselves down to this world and, by-and-by, we feel that we are too much tied, bound, hampered, hinderedand we cry out, How shall we get free? The only way to get free is to get Christ! If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed. If you take Christ in your arms and say, with Simeon, My eyes have seen Your salvation, you can then say, Everyone else and everything else may now go.   
*Yes, should You take them all away,   
Yet will I not repine;   
Before they were possessed by me,   
They were entirely Thine*   
And, as You have given me Christ, You may do what You will with me as to other things! Where Christ is not valued, gold becomes an idol. Where Christ is not prized, health becomes an idol. Where Christ is not loved, learning and fame become idols. Where Christ is not first and foremost, even personal beauty may become an idol. But when Christ becomes our All in All, because our eyes have seen His salvation, then the idols fall! Dagon is broken! We are emancipated and we can say concerning all these things, Yes, whether you come or whether you go, you are not lords of the houseyou are but comers and goers unto me henceforth and forever, for a clear conception that Christ is Gods salvation and a full grasp of Him as

mine, have set my Spirit free from every fetter that before held me in captivity.   
IV. I must not pause here, because I want you to notice how being able to say, My eyes have seen Your salvation, gives to a man DAUNTLESS COURAGE.   
He who has once seen Christ as Gods salvation is not afraid to see death. Now, he says, I can look death in the face without dread, for I have seen Gods salvation. He is not afraid of that tremendous Judgment Seat which will be set in the clouds of Heaven, for He who will sit upon that Judgment Seat is Gods salvation to us who believe! The man who is looking unto Jesus is not afraid of the day when the earth will rock and reel, and everything based upon it will shake to its destruction. He is not afraid of the star called Wormwood, nor of seeing Heaven and earth on a blaze. My eyes have seen Your salvation, he says, and he bears this glorious vision about with him wherever he goes. It is more to him than any earthly charm could be! It is more powerful than the most potent charm of the mystic or the magician. Such a man is safe! He must be safehis eyes have seen Gods salvation!   
If you would have a courage of the truest kind that needs no stimulus of drink, and no excitement of the noise of trumpet and of drumthe calm courage that can suffer pain, that can bear rebuke, that can endure slander, that can stand alone, that could stand foot to foot with the infernal fiend, himself, and yet not be afraid. If you would have such courage as that, I say, you must got Christ in your arms, for then shall you say with Simeon, Lord, come what may, I have nothing to fear, for my eyes have seen Your salvation.   
**Fearless of Hell and ghastly death,   
Id break through every foe!   
The wings of love, and arms of faith,   
Should bear me conqueror through.**   
V. I will not detain you much longer, for the time is well near spent, but I would say this one more thing, He who lays hold on Christ, makes a JOYFUL APPROPRIATION of Him. His sight of Christ, his clear apprehension of what Christ is, is accompanied by a personal appropriation of Christ to himself.   
This is the matter that puzzles many. I have, during the past week, talked with several people who have heard from me concerning the way of salvation and the preciousness of Christ. And the question of many of these enquirers has been this, How can we get hold of Christ? We believe that all you say about Him is true. Christ is Gods salvation, but how can we take Him to be ours? You seem to treat Christ as if He were yours beyond all question. How can we learn to do the same?   
My answer is, when you once know how the Savior saves, and how He is Gods salvation, trust Him to save you! That trust grips Him, holds Himand if you can hold HimHe is yours. We have certain rights of property extant among us and a man may have to bring his title deeds to prove that a house is really his own. But in the Kingdom of Grace, the only title deed you need is that you have hold of Christ. May I take Him, then, without any right? Yes, taking Christ gives you the right to take Him! To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God. There is a piece of bread on yonder table. I mean to have it for my own. It will be of no use for you to dispute with me about the matter, for I shall put it beyond all dispute. How? I shall take that bread in my hand. Well, you can wrench it from me. I shall do more than thatI shall eat it! I shall digest itit will become a part of my own being! You will not get it away from me, thenand I do not care if you go to the law with me to try to get it! Possession is more than nine points of the law in such a case as that. Digestion and assimilation will be ten points of the law, certainly! Now, it is just so with Christ. Poor Soul, take Him; believe Him; trust Him; appropriate Him! Trust Him more, and more, and more! The more the devil tries to take Him from you, trust Him the more. Plunge yourself deeper and deeper, still, into this sea of salvation, and trust Christ still more.   
Perhaps someone says, But how may I know at first that I have a right to trust Christ? You have a right to trust Christ because you are commanded to do it. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. Make a dash for this great blessing! Take Christ, tonight, regardless, for, though it should seem like robbery to you to take Him, yet if you once have Him, He will never be taken away from you! Make a dash for Christ, I say, tonight, and take Him, saying, I believe Him. I trust Him. I rest myself on Him. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but if you trust Christ, you shall never be ashamed! There was never a man yet who dared trust Christ and yet found that Christ was not equal to his need, or that He did not fully supply all his needs.   
Simeon took Christ up in his arms. Somebody might have said, Old man, what have you to do with the new-born King? Old man, you may be just and devout, but dare you handle the Incarnate God? Dare you fondle Him upon whose shoulders God has laid the key of His Kingdom, whose name is called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace? Dare you touch Him? Yes, He dares do it! He takes Him up in his arms. He clasps Him to his heart. He rejoices over Him. He is ready to die with delight, now that he has found Christ! Come, poor troubled ones, come tonight and take Christ into your arms! And you, dear saints of God, who have done this long ago, do it again! Take Him right up into your arms, as though He were still a Babe. Take Him to your heart and say, He is everything to memy Love, my Hope, my brotherthis blessed Incarnate God who loved me and gave Himself for me. If you can do this, it shall be well with you now, it shall be well with you in death, it shall be well with you throughout eternity!   
Have I among my hearers any who are postponing this all-important business, putting it off till a more convenient season? Let me tell them something that ought to warn them of the risk they are running. Once upon a time the Prince of Darkness said to the evil spirits under his command, I want to see which of you can be my best servant. The Gospel is being preached in various places and many persons are hearing it. And I am afraid that my kingdom will suffer loss. Unless something can be done, I fear that many will desert from under the black flag and enlist under the standard of Jesus of Nazareth. I would gladly prevent thiswhich of you will help me? Then up rose one who said, I will go forth and say that the Bible is not true, that Christ is not God, and that what is preached is not the Truth of God. But the great Prince of the Pit answered him, You will not serve my turn just now. There are a few places where you will be very useful, but the most of those who are listening to this Word will laugh at you and drive you back. You smell too much of the place where you go on my errands. You cannot do what I need now.   
Up stood another of the evil throng and said, Let me go and I will bring forth certain new views of truth and various fresh doctrines, and with these I will turn aside the thoughts of men from the old faith. But the Prince of the power of the air replied, You, too, are a good servant of mine, and you stand me in good stead at other times, but just now you are not the one for the task I propose. Then out spoke one who said, O Prince of Darkness, I think I am your good soldier on this occasion. Here am I, send me. And what will you do? said Beelzebub, What will you do? I will go forth and tell the people that the warnings of the preacher are true and the voice of the Gospel is the voice of God! I will not awaken and arouse them by any sort of opposition, but I will tell them that there is time enough, by-and-by, to attend to these things. I will bid them wait a little longer and bide their time. I will put this word into the mouth of each one, that he may say to the preacher, Go your way, for this time. When I have a convenient season, I will call for you.   
Then the grim master of the Pit smiled and said, Go your way, my faithful servant, you are he that shall carry out my purpose right thoroughly, and so shall you foil the preacherand the Word of God that he utters shall fall to the ground. Is there not a message here for someone who is listening to my words?   
My eyes have seen Your salvation. How I wish that I could make some here who do not know it, understand how simple is the way of salvation! You are a sinner, guilty and condemned! Christ becomes a Man, takes your sins, suffers in your place. You accept Him to stand for you. You permit Him, by your faith, to be accepted as your Substitute, and His pains are put down instead of yours, and you are accepted in the Beloved, and saved in Him. Oh, if you could but do thisand you may do it tonight before you leave this place, and I hope you willif you do this, whether you are old or young, there will come to you a heart full of benediction for life, and the best of all preparations for death! Truly happy shall you be if you can say, My eyes have seen Your salvation.   
I seem as if I did not need to see anything else, after having seen Christ as Gods salvation! There is a story told of Muslims, who often are very fanatical, and do very strange and horrible things in their fanaticism. But they have been known to go to Mecca, to see the tomb of their prophet, and when they have seen his tomb, they have taken a hot steel and have drawn it across their eyes, that they might never see anything elsethat indeed they might die with the view of the false prophets tomb as their last sight!   
Now, that is not what we do, but still, we would act in the spirit of it. My eyes have seen Your salvation. People say, See Naples and die. They mean that it is so lovely that when you have seen it, there is nothing more to see. See Christ, and what else is there to see? Now, whether you sail over the blue sea beneath a bluer sky, or dive into the deeps of this murky atmospherewhether you are in a palace or in a dungeon, sick or full of bounding healthall these are items of small consequence, if your eyes have seen Gods salvation, for God has blessed you as only God can bless you! Go and live in peace and go and die in peaceand praise the name of Him who gave you such a Savior to see, and the power to see Him! The Lord bless you, Beloved! Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON. **LUKE 2:21-38.**

Verse 21. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Although the old Law ends with Christ, it is very instructive to notice that He came under the Law and conformed to all its appointments. Jesus, therefore, had to be circumcised. In Him the Law was fulfilled in every point, even to the jots and tittlesnothing was omitted. Behold how perfect is the righteousness which He worked out for His people!

22. And when the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord. Everything was done that was required by the Jewish Law, you see. 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. Being found in fashion as a Man, and a Man under the Jewish LawJesus and His parents were obedient to all its requirements.

23, 24. (As it is written in the Law of the Lord, Every male that opened the womb shall be called holy to the Lord); and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the Law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. This proves the poverty of our Lords parents. If they had been able to bring a costlier sacrifice, they would have done so. The Law required the offering of a lamb for a burnt offering, but there was a gracious provision in the case of the poor motherIf she is not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean. Even in the case of a working woman, the birth of her first-born son required from her a sacrifice; but it might be of the smallest kindA pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. Think of your Lord, Himself, redeemed by a sacrifice, a pair of doves offered in His place! What a wonderful coming down to our condition and position was this!

25. And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout. He blended in his character his duty to man and his duty to Godhe was just and devout.

25. Waiting for the consolation of Israel. His devotion was not that of a blind devotee. He had eyes of expectation! He was expecting the Messiah to come, who is, the consolation of Israel.

25, 26. And the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the   
Lords Christ. That which the Holy Spirit reveals will assuredly come to pass, as it did in the experience of old Simeon.

27. And He came by the Spirit into the Temple. Men who have the Spirit will be led by the Spirit. Simeon came into the Temple at the right moment. Just when a young man was entering, with his wife and new-born Child, He came by the Spirit into the Temple.

27, 28. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the Law, then took he Him up in his arms. He came in, I say, at the right time! Did ever anybody who was not led by the Spirit, find Christ? Somebody has come in here tonight and he does not know why he has comehe has been led here by the Spirit that he may see Jesus, and may have such a sight of Him as shall be his salvation! God grant that it may be proved that many an aged Simeon has traveled here this Sabbath night, led by the Spirit for this purpose, to find the Savior in His own house!

28, 32. And blessed God, and said, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people; a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of Your people Israel. Simeon had studied the ancient prophecies to good purpose and he perceived from them that the Lords Christ would be a Light to lighten the Gentiles as well as the Glory of Gods ancient people, Israel.

33. And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. We may be very near to Christ and yet know very little about Him. Joseph and the virgin mother did not understand those things which were spoken of Him. One wonders it was so after all that had been revealed to themwe marvel that they marveled!

34. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary, His mother, Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. Do you understand that? Whenever Christ comes to a man, there is first a falland a rising again afterwards. You never knew the Lord aright if He did not first give you a fall! He pulls us down from our pride and self-sufficiency and then He lifts us up to a position of eternal safety! He is set for this purpose! This is the great design of Christs comingThis child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.

34. And for a sign which shall be spoken against. Christ and His Gospel will always be spoken against. If you know a gospel which is approved by the age and patronized by the learned, that gospel is a lie! You may be sure of that. But if it is spoken against, if it is slandered, if it is called absurd, unscientific, and I know not what, all that is in its favor!

35. (Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also). This favored woman had the greatest smart to go with her great honor. She saw the suffering and anguish of her Son and, the nearer you are to Christ, the more of sorrow it will cost you, sorrow which you may be well content to bear. You know how it is put in that hymn of which many of us are very fond

*If I find Him, if I follow,   
What His recompense here?   
Many a labor, many a sorrow,   
Many a tear.*

Yet, I say again, you may be well content to bear it all for His sake, for you remember what the next verse of the hymn is   
*If I still hold closely to Him,   
What has He at last?   
Sorrow vanquished, labor ended,   
Jordan past.*

35. That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. Christ and His Cross are the revealers of the thoughts of mens hearts. Mens hearts can conceal their thoughts until Christs Cross comes nearthen the old enmity rises up, the heart rebelsand we see what is really in mens hearts.

36, 37. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the Temple, but served God with fasts and prayers night and day. It would have been a pity for Christ to have been received in the Temple only by a man. There must be a woman there, too, to join in Simeons swan song, and to unite her testimony with his.

38. And she coming in that instant.God knows how to time what we call our accidental walksShe coming in that instant.   
38. Gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spoke of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. So that the song of Simeon was sweetened by the voice of Annaand they both rejoiced in God their Savior! And their joy was shared by all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. May many of us have a share in that same joy as, by faith, we lovingly gaze upon the Lords Christ.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #3177 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

CHRIST SEEN AS GODS SALVATION   
NO. 3177

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1909. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.   
My eyes have seen Your Salvation.   
Luke 2:30.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are #1417, Volume 24 YOUR SALVATION and #2293, Volume 39  
SIMEONS SWAN SONGRead/download the entire sermons,  
free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

THOUSANDS of times that song of Simeon has been sung by careless, thoughtless persons, but surely it is one of those songs that ought never to come except from believing lips. To make it merely a part of a liturgy and for shamelessly living men to say, My eyes have seen Your Salvation, must be an atrocious sin before God! Let all who have ventured to use such words as these without having thought of their meaning, confess their sin before God and ask that He would make those words to be true which have up to now been so frivolously uttered and that before they close their eyes in death, they may see Gods Salvation!

I. I shall, first of all, TAKE THE TEXT AS IT DROPS FROM SIMEONS LIPS and follow his leading.   
We will start with Simeons main idea. He came into the Temple. He saw there a little Babe and he recognized, in that newly-born Child, Jesus the promised Savior! And as he took up that Savior into his arms, he said, Mine eyes have seenwhat? Your Salvation, Gods Salvation not only the Worker of the Salvation, but the Salvation itself! From which I gather that wherever we see Jesus, we see Gods Salvation, Wherever our eyes spiritually light upon the Christ of God, there we see Gods Salvation! Whether in Bethlehems manger, or on Calvarys Cross, or on yonder Throne of Glory from which He shall judge the quick and the deadwherever we see Him, we see the Salvation of God!   
Let me then take your thoughts along the history of our Savior for a few moments. Far back into the ages, when as yet this world and sun and moon were not createdwhen God dwelt alonethen, in the foreknowledge of God, it was apparent that man would sinthat elect men, beloved of God, would fall in the common ruin. Then came the grand debate, the mighty question to be only solved by the supreme Intellect of Heaven, How can sinners be reconciled to God? And the Covenant was made, that ancient Covenant of which David sang, ordered in all things and sure. Jesus, the Second Person of the blessed Godhead, entered into Covenant with His Father, that in the fullness of time, He would stand in the sinners place and pay the sinners debtthat He would head up in Himself as many as the Father gave Him and become the second and restoring Adam to them, though, through the first and falling Adam, they, with others, had been destroyed. Then, when the Covenant was signed and the Divine parties to that grand transaction struck hands and ratified the bond, my eyes, as they look into that vast eternity and, with holy curiosity, desire to scan that council chambermy eyes perceive Gods Salvation in the Person of Jesus Christ!

This was all that could have been seen by faith, even after the world had been created and man had fallen, until that day when the fullness of time was comewhen Jesus Christ, who had covenanted to save His people, came to perform the work. Oh, the grandeur of that day when angels came in haste to sing that the Babe was born in Bethlehem! Ah, Simeon! What you see there is not merely a Babea little Child hanging upon a womans breastit is the Word Incarnate, the Logos, without whom was not anything made that is made! He that spoke and it was done, lies there! He that said, Light be, and light wasthe Word that was with God when He balanced the clouds and when He fixed the sockets of the universe, even He is there in the Person of that Child! The Son of Mary is also the Son of God! And whenever you, Beloved, look to God Incarnate and understand that wondrous mystery, The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and men chosen of Him beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truththen when you see God in human flesh, you see Gods Salvation!   
Follow with the eyes of your love that Babe when He had become a Man. See Him, in the obedience of 30 years to His reputed father, handling the saw and the hammer in the carpenters shop of Joseph. Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself. See Him in the three years of His most blessed ministry! What work was crowded into those years! How did the zeal of Gods house eat Him up! The dews fell upon Him in the night when He kept the sheep of God in the wilderness and on the mountains brow shepherded them in His midnight prayers. Oftentimes the sweat fell from Him in that daily service which, as the Servant of servants, He rendered to all His brethren. None toiled as He did none so arduously, none so perfectly, none so willingly, none with so complete a bending of His whole faculties to His all-absorbing work! Behold the righteousness of the saintsthis work of Christ is making a robe in which the saints shall be arrayed. His active obedience renders unto God a recompense for our breaches of His holy Law. In Christ, the actively-obedient, you see Gods Salvation!  
But oh, let your eyes swim with tears as you follow Him from His active to His passive obedience. I stayed midway in a verse just now, Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himselfas you go on, you readand became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. There He is in yonder garden among the olives! Do you hear His sighs, His deep-fetched groans? Do you mark the sweat drops of His blood as they fall upon the earth? He is pleading, If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. But it is not possible. Do you see Him hurried away with the felons kiss still upon His cheekhurried away by traitorous hands to Caiaphashurried to Pilate and Herod, one after the other, scorned and scoffed everywhere? He, whose visage is bright as the morning when the sun arises, and whose Countenance is like Lebanon, comely as the cedarsHe it is that they make nothing of, and laugh and scoff at! Into His face, which angels look on with hushed awe, they cast their accursed spittle! They buffet Him and cry, Hail King of the Jews. They mock His royalty with a crown of thorns and His priesthood by binding His eyes and saying, Who is it that struck You? Remember that He who is in this shame is Gods Salvation! He is made lower than earths basest menials that He might lift us higher than Heavens brightest seraphs! He came down from where He was in Heavens excellency to all this depth of shamethat out of all our shame He might lift us up to the supernal excellency!   
Then, at length, it comes to a climax and the patient Sufferer gives His hands to the iron and His feet to the nails. They lift Him upHe must die a felons death! Outside the camp He must suffer. Made sin for us, He cannot be in the congregation. He must be numbered with the transgressors! Behold Him dying in bodily pains not to be readily described! But, the worst was thisGod, to whom good men look for succor when they die, refused Him help! Jehovah, who never did forsake the virtuous, forsook Him, the most virtuous of all! He who is our castle and high tower, our rampart and defense in our extremity, hid as it were, His face from Himand that bitterest of all cries, which contains in it as much grief as all the shrieks of the damned in Hell, went up, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? There He was, the forsaken One. Yet He was Gods Salvation, for He was   
*Bearing, that we might never bear,   
His Fathers righteous ire*   
enduring to be cast away from Heaven that we, base as we are, might be enfolded in the Divine bosom and loved with the Divine affection!   
Nor is this all. On the third day, He who on the Cross had conquered, rose to claim the victory. Behold Him! He is Gods Salvation as He rises from the tomb. Where is your sting, O Death? Where is your victory, boastful Grave? Jehovah Jesus has saved us from death! He has risen from the sepulcher. Behold Him as He ascends! Let not your eyes be too dazzled with the Glory. He rides in solemn pomp up to Heavens gate. Your ears can even now catch the echoes of that song, Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. He that enters there has saved us and has gone to receive gifts for men. His entrance there is the entrance of all His people, for He is their Representative and takes possession of Heaven on their behalf. Being there for us, we are saved! His Presence on the Throne is the Presence of Gods Salvation!  
If time did not fail me, I would like to pursue the story and point you to Him, looking still like a lamb that has been slain, pleading with His never ceasing, ever-prevalent intercession. I would like to bid your faith anticipate the day when He shall come again, with no sin-offering, but unto salvation, when you and I, seeing Him, shall see Gods Salvation when our bodies shall be perfected, no more to be weak and suffering, but made like His glorious body! Our Brothers and Sisters that have gone before us, who at this moment sleep in their silent tombs among the purple heather, or in the crowded cemetery, or in the chill vault they, also, shall hear the sound of His Second Advent when the herald blast shall bid the world know that the Lord has come and *From beds of dust and silent clay   
To realms of everlasting day*   
they shall wing their triumphant way, for Jesus Christ shall be to them, as to us, Gods Salvation! That was Simeons idea, I think. I have but hammered out his ingot of gold a little to show you that where Jesus is, there is the Salvation of God.   
II. And now, in the second place, we shall TAKE SOME LEAVES OUT OF OUR OWN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.   
The text says, My eyes have seen Your Salvation. Simeon must not be allowed the monopoly of these words. I claim them, My eyes have seen Your Salvation. Brothers and Sisters, many of you can, in a spiritual sense, use the same language as the Patriarch about to depart uses. You too, can say, My eyes have seen Your Salvation. Will you turn over the book of your life awhile as I turn over mine?   
Well, we need not read those early pages, the pages of our estate of sin. Drop tears and blot them out! Dear hand of Jesus stained with blood, wipe down each one of them and blot them out forever! But what is this first bright page? It is the page where we began to live, the page that records our spiritual birth. And I think we shall find written somewhere across it, This day my eyes beheld Gods Salvation. Well do I remember that day! I had looked here and looked there. This was my questionI have offended God, how can He forgive me? It was no use to tell me God was mercifulI had an answer for thatGod is just. It availed nothing to say, Sin is little, I knew better! It was heavy to mewhat must it do to Him? The question I wanted to have answered wasHow can God in justice pass by my iniquities? Then did I learn, as in a moment, this sweet story which has been my delight to tell in various forms a thousand timesthat Jesus came and said, I will be the sinners Surety. I will stand in his place of curse and ruin and will bear for him the penalty of painfor him I will even bear death. I learned that if I looked to Jesusjust looked, that was allthat if I simply trusted in Jesus, I would be saved! I looked and, happy day, my eyes saw Gods Salvation! That blessed Doctrine of Substitution, that simple command, Believe and livethat was the glass through which my soul looked and saw Gods Salvation!   
But if I remember rightly, a little further onin my case it was not above a week after I had seen my sin forgiven, I felt myself in another difficulty. I found I could not do what I would. My will now was never to sin again, but I did sin. I willed to be holy, but I was not what I would be. I groaned and cried, Where is salvation from this evil heart of mine, from this corruption of my nature? And I remember well going to the same place where I had heard of the Savior and hearing the minister declare that if any man felt in himself the evil nature, he was not saved. Ah, I thought, I know better than that! I could not be persuaded of that, for I knew I was saved as I had looked to Christ, but I did find that I was where Paul was when he said, To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. I seemed, then, to say to myself, My will is so fickle, how can I hold on? My power is so feeble, how can I stand against sin?   
Ah, and well do I remember the day when I could say in a more emphatic sense than before, My eyes have seen Your Salvation. For, as I searched the Word, I perceived that as many as believed in Christ had eternal life and eternal life is not a life that lasts a little whileit is what it is said to beeverlasting life. Then I perceived in the Word that against this everlasting life the old body of sin and death would struggle, but that it was written that the new life was a living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever. And I discovered the Apostles words, Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a grand discovery when I perceived that the life God had given me could not die any more than God could! That it was a beam from Himself! That He had made me a partaker of that Divine Nature since I had escaped the corruption that was in the world through lust. That the Spirit of the Most High was given to the Believer to dwell in him and to be with him forever! And that He who began the work had declared that He would carry it on and perfect it unto the day of the appearing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

When I learned those Truths of God, I felt as if I had not seen Gods Salvation before. I had seen so little of it the first timeenough to make me leap for joy, it is truebut on the second discovery, I beheld that He who redeemed me from the guilt of sin would quite as certainly redeem me from the power of sin! That He who set me on the rock would keep me there! That He who put me on the road to Heaven had said about all His servants, I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. That was a glorious discovery! None of your two pennyhalfpenny salvations that some people profess to have, that only last for a day or two, or a few weeks at most and then departin Christ today and out of Christ tomorrow! Christ has pardoned their sin and yet they think He has not given them salvation! But to know that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. That He has said, He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. That the righteous also shall hold on his way and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. That the Word of Christ stands sure, I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My handsthis is to see Gods Salvation in a broader light! I pray that every hearer who has seen Christ may go on to see more of Christ till he has seen his full security in the Person of the Well-Beloved!  
But further on, (and it was with me a long time later), when I had discovered that the Christ who saved me from the guilt was also pledged to save me from the power of sinthen I found afresh that He was Gods Salvation! I discovered partly through thought and partly through the clear testimony of the written Word, that every soul that believes in Christ, believes in Christ because God made Him believe in Christ! That concerning that soul there was a purpose made by God that that soul should be a Believerand that purpose was made from all eternity, and that purpose once made could never be changed! It was like the mountains of brass which could never be moved. I say that the salvation of the Believer in Christ did not rest on his own will, but on Gods will! That the purpose that saved him was not his own purpose, even as it is written, it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. Why, I remember that was as good a discovery to me as the very first one that I made! It was almost like another conversion! I had been up to the ankles in the Water of Life before, but now I was up to my very neck! And what could I say but this  
*Im a monument of Grace,   
A sinner saved by blood!   
The streams of love I trace   
Up to the Fountain, God.   
And in His sacred bosom see   
Eternal thoughts of love to me?*   
Here it is that my eyes have seen Gods Salvationseen the source of it, the secret springs of it, the eternity of it, the immutability of it and the Divinity of it! I pray that every burdened child of God may also get to see that. Then will he indeed sing for joy of heart!   
Probably, dear Brothers and Sisters, we have not all gone further than that, if as far, but it is a very blessed thing when we are led to see another Truth of God, namely, that every quickened Believer is one with Jesus Christ. We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. The Christ in Heaven is the same Christ who is here on earth in all of His saved onesthey are all parts of Him. There is a vital union subsisting between them so that whatever Christ is, they are. They were one with Him of old, they were one in the grave, one when He rose, one when He triumphed over His foes and they are at this day one with Him as *Now in Heaven He takes His seat,   
While seraphs sing all Hells defeat.*

Every Believer is as much one with Christ as the finger is one with the body. If I lost my finger, I would not be a perfect man as to my body. And if Christ lost the meanest member of His body, it would be a part of Christ that would be lostand Christ would not be a perfect Christ! We are one with Jesus by indissoluble, vital unionand if your soul perceives that, you will clap your hands and say to the FatherI have indeed seen Your Salvation, for now I see that I am in Heaven. He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We are saved and glorified in Christ Jesus as our Representative and Covenant Head!

Not even yet have I exhausted this theme! And I only pray that you and I may go on to know yet more and more the heights and depths of Gods Salvation! I was thinking just now before I began to preach that if ever you and I should be permitted to look down upon the world of miseryif in some future state we should ever gaze into that land of darkness and despair where sinners cast away from God are suffering the due reward of their sinsif our eyes should ever see their agonies and our ears should ever hear their cries of despair, we would, among other things, say, My God, I never knew before how great Your Salvation is, for I also should have been there, but for Your mercy. Until I saw something of what Hell is, I could not tell how much I owed You. I could not say that in its heights and depths my eyes had seen Your Salvation.

And, Brothers and Sisters, (to put a better, a more pleasing light upon it)   
*When I stand before the Throne,   
Dressed in beauty not my own*

when I shall see Himand see Him I shall, for I can say with Job, Whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold, and not another. When you and I shall cast our crowns at His feet, when we shall raise our voices with all the white-robed throng in the everlasting hallelujahs, then we shall say, My God, my Father, My eyes have seen Your Salvation.

III. Time fails me, so I must pass on to spend a few minutes in a third portion of my topic. It is thisTHERE ARE SOME HERE WHO HAVE NEVER SEEN GODS SALVATION.

The Gospel is hid from them. And if it is hid, it is not hid because we have used hard words to hide it. If our Gospel is hid, it is hid from them who are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not. Blind Sinner, do you desire to see the Salvation of God? Ah, you say, If I know my own heart, I do. Why, then, can you not see it, Man? It is very plain. Ah, I see, your eyes are sealed up!

The first seal I see on your eyes, like a fixed scale, (and oh, I wish I could take it off of you), is thisyou do not even believe that you need any salvation. The man who does not believe he needs saving, of course will never see Gods Salvation! In your heart you say, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. But my poor Friend, be persuaded to take Gods opinion of you, which is much nearer the truth than yours. You are naked, blind, poor and miserable! You are lost, ruined and condemned, as it is written, He that believes not is condemned already. Is that scale gone?

Now I see another, (I wish that I could take that off, too), and that is, you know you are blind, but you say, I must try and save myself. This is a very thick scale. You will never see while that is on your eyes! Do you not notice how Simeon put itnot, My eyes have seen my own salvation, but, My eyes have seen Your Salvation, that is, Gods Salvation, the Lords salvation! Let me tell you, poor Man, if ever you are saved, your salvation must be Gods in the beginning, Gods in the carrying on and Gods in the concluding! No salvation will ever serve your turn but one which is Divine from top to bottom! If Natures fingers could nimbly spin a garment that should cover human nakedness, it would be of no use. All that Nature spins, God must unravel before a soul can be clothed in the righteousness of Christ! It is not your doings, Manit is Christs doings that must save you! Not your tears, but Christs blood! Not your feelings, not anything in you or from you! Listen you who have an ear to hear itSalvation is of the Lordfrom first to last!

If that scale shall come off your eyes, I know that you will say, Now I begin to see enough to know that I cannot see. I have just enough light to discover the darkness I am in. I see that none can save me but God. He must do itbut will He save me? Will He save me? Lend me your finger, Man. Do you see? No, you do not, but there is the hem of Jesus garmenttouch that with your finger and you shall be restored to sight at once! I mean thisJesus died to save such as you aretrust Him and you are saved! You are saved completely and at once! A physician who was under some concern of soul, asked his patient, who was a godly man, Can you explain to me what faith is? Yes, said his godly patient, I can let you see it very soon if God will let you see it. It is like thisI am very ill, I cannot help myself, I do not attempt to do it, I have confidence in youI put myself into your care, I take what medicine you send meI do what you bid me. That is faith. You must trust yourself in the hands of Christ like that. That is it. When you, my dear Friend, wholly and entirely trust yourself in the hands of Christthen your eyes have seen Gods Salvation!

I have no time for more. I wish I had. But I want to say this final word to everyone who has seen Gods Salvation. Perhaps one of you is poor. Well, go home tonight saying, I am poor, but my eyes have seen Your Salvation. One of you, perhaps, is in suffering. Then say, I feel ill. Never mind, my eyes have seen Your Salvation. And perhaps there are some warnings and intimations that make another of you think you will soon be called to die. Consumption is undermining your constitutionnever mind, dont fretyour eyes have seen Gods Salvation! How much better to die in an attic or in a ditch and see Gods Salvation, than be carried in the most pompous manner to your grave a soul that knows nothing of God and of the Savior! O you that are much tried and much troubled, bear up, bear up! Your sorrow will not last much longer! When you and I get to Heaven, as I trust we shall, as I know we shall if we are resting on the Atonement of Christ, these troubles by the way will only be matter for us to talk of, and to say to one another, How graciously the Lord has upheld us in His Providence, and how wonderfully He has brought us through every trial! Even in my poverty, my eyes saw His Salvation. In my sickness and in my death, I did but see it all the more clearly because of the clouds and darkness that were round about me! God bless you, dear Friends! I earnestly pray that you may all see Gods Salvation! May He hear the prayer, for Christs sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LUKE 2:1-40.**

Verses 1-9. And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria). And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the Glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sorely afraid. These men were probably poor and illiterate, but that did not hinder God from revealing Himself to them, nor prevent the coming of His Son to them! They were engaged in their ordinary calling, keeping watch over their flocks by night, when this great blessing came to them. Seldom does such a blessing as this come to idlers. It was not while they were gadding abroad and wasting their time, but while they kept watch over their flocks that the angel of the Lord came upon them. First one angel led the way and then a multitude of the heavenly host followed and these poor men, perhaps troubled with the common superstition of the Jews that the appearance of God, or any supernatural visitation, would always be followed by death, were sorely afraid.

10, 11. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. The anointed Savior has full power to save, for He is Christ the Lord and, therefore, He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

12. And this shall be a sign unto youYou shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. [See Sermons #1026, Volume 17JOY BORN  
AT BETHLEHEM and #1330, Volume 22THE GREAT BIRTHDAYRead/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Not in marble halls, wrapped in

purple and fine linen and welcomed by the great and mighty of earth! No, this greatest of all princes is born amid the poverty of our ordinary manhood! He is One chosen out of the people, the peoples Saviorand a manger receives the peoples King.

13. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God. They could not stay behind! The news spread through Heaven that an angel had gone to announce the birth of Christ and the others flew through the pearly gates and hastened to overtake the heraldand reached him just as he had concluded his message Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host. These cohorts of the Lord came riding post haste, Praising God.

13-17. And saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into Heaven, the shepherds said, one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us. And they came with haste and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. Good news is not to be kept to ourselves. When we have ascertained its truth we are to tell it to others, and we are especially to tell the goodness of salvation! Tell it, O you who know it in your own hearts by blessed experience! Tell it, though it will sometimes be with broken accents in the feebleness of your flesh, yet even then tell it in the ardor of your hearts affection and God will bless your testimonyand others will learn the Good News through you.

18, 19. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them. Weighed them, estimated them at their right value.

19. In her heart. The best of coffers to lay up anything in is the heart! Happy are those who, like Mary, store up the things of Christ, not in their brain, though that would make them orthodoxbut in their heart for that will bring them salvation!

20-24. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord; (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord) and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the Law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. Our Savior put Himself under the Law for our sakes and in every jot and tittle He observed it. So we are delivered from its dominion, for if Christ has fulfilled the Law on our account, it has no more claim upon us. You are not under the Law, but under Grace.

25. And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was   
Simeon. [See Sermon #659, Volume 11SIMEONRead/download the entire sermon, free of

charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] And the same man was just and devout. This combination makes up a complete characterjust towards man devout towards God. There are many who think they are just, but their justness does not extend to their fellow creatures, and they forget the claims of the Most High upon them. On the other hand, I have known men who have pretended to a vast amount of devotion, but who have never been just. Such persons are hypocrites, as the others are robbers of God! But he who is just and devoutjust towards man and devout towards Godhas the character of a true man! Such was Simeon, just and devout.

25-29. Waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lords Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the Temple: and when the parents brought in the Child, Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the Law, then he took Him up in his arms and blessed God, and said, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word. You see, dear Friends, he was not afraid to die and he knew that he could not die until he had seen the Messiah! Some of us, if we had a Revelation that on the occurrence of a certain event, we would die, might be filled with alarm or anxiety! But it is not so with holy Simeonhe rather longs to depart in peace. He looks upon the coming of the Lords Christ with great joy because now he knows the battle of life for him will soon be over and that he will enter into his victory!

30-34. For my eyes have seen Your Salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people; a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of the people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of Him. And Simeon blessed them and said unto Mary, His mother, Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of

many in Israel. [See Sermon #907, Volume 15CHRISTTHE RISE AND FALL OF MANY Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There were

many who fell through their offenses against Jesus, but blessed be His name, there are still many who rise through Him, rise first to newness of life on earth and afterwards to resurrection life in Glory! Jesus is set for bothHe must be to one the savor of death unto death, and to another He must be the savor of life unto life.

34. And for a sign which shall be spoken against. How true has this been! The Cross has been to many a stumbling block, and to the worldly wise it has been foolishness. And so will it be to the worlds end!

35. (Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul, also). Great privileges often involve great troubles. Mary was highly favored and truly blessed among women, yet no woman ever had greater sorrow than she had!

35. That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. Christs death revealed the thoughts of many hearts. It revealed the thoughts in the heart of Pilate, that he loved popularity better than the Truth of God. It revealed the thoughts of the heart of Judas, that he loved gold better than he loved his Master. It revealed the thoughts in the heart of Caiaphas, that he would keep to old customs rather than to the right. It revealed the thoughts in the hearts of the disciples and showed what poor timid, trembling hearts they had. Peters impulsive spirit, too, was revealed in all its weakness by the death of the Savior. The Cross is the great touchstone! Wherever it goes, it tests and tries useven as the crucible tries the metal that is put into itand lets us know what manner of men we are. Do you love Christ? Do you glory in His Cross? Then it is well with you. But do you despise the Cross? Do you set up your own righteousness in opposition to it? Are you depending upon anything beside Jesus Christ and Him crucified? Then His Cross reveals you to be self-righteous and dead in trespasses and sins! Our Savior was not only to be received by men, but He was to be welcomed by women also, so now we read.

36-40. And there was one Anna, a Prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about 84 years, which departed not from the Temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant, gave thanks, likewise, unto the Lord, and spoke of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. And when they had performed all things according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the Child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the Grace of God was upon Him.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.  
END OF VOLUME 55 Sermon #826 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

CHRIST, THE GLORY OF HIS PEOPLE   
NO. 826

**DELIVERED ON LORDS DAY EVENING, MARCH 22, 1868, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**A light to lighten the Gentiles,   
and the Glory of Your people Israel.   
Luke 2:32.**

WE must read this passage literally, for so Simeon intended it. The Lord Jesus Christ, though once despised and rejected by His own countrymen, is the great honor and splendor of Gods people, Israel. It is reckoned an honor to a nation when eminent persons are born of its stock and lineagebut Israel can claim the palm above all lands, for she can say that our Lord sprang out of Judah.

Put together all the heroic and famous names of Greece and Rome add all the literary splendors of Germany and the flashing beauties of France. Combine with these the blazing fame of Milton and Shakespeare, of Bacon and of Newton in our own landand all countries put together cannot compass so great a glory of manhood as can the nation of the Jews, for they can claim not so much Moses, and David, and the Prophets, as Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

If mention is made of Egypt and Babylon, or Philistia and Tyre, saying, This man was born there, the answer shall be concerning Zion, The Son of Man was born in her. It ill behooves us ever to speak slightingly of the Jew. It ill behooves the Christian Church to despond concerning the conversion of the seed of Israel, or to be so indifferent as she sometimes is as to the conversion of Israel. Brethren, the day will come when the veil shall be taken from the eyes, and the hardness from the heart, and Abrahams sons shall behold the true Messiah and accept Him as their Glory and their All.

In that day, after the long time of winter, how bright the summer will be! If their casting away brought the Gentiles so much blessing, what will their gathering together be but life from the dead! After so long an alienation, how ravishing and delightful will be the reconciliation between the Bridegroom and His ancient spouse! How will the earth ring with joy and every river in Judeas land flow to the tune of Heavens own music, when Jesus and the Jew shall be reconciled, and He shall be, as He is prophesied to be, the Glory of His people Israel!

*The hymn shall yet in Zion swell   
That sounds Messiahs praise,   
And Your loved name, Immanuel!   
As once in ancient days.   
For Israel yet shall own her King,   
For her salvation waits,   
And hill and dale shall sweetly sing   
With praise in all her gates.   
Hasten, O Lord, these promised days,   
When Israel shall rejoice,   
And Jew and Gentile join in praise,   
With one united voice.*

It would have been wrong to use the text as I am going to use it if I had not first given you its primary meaning. We have no right to use texts for other purposes without, first of all, giving the literal meaning, and saying, Such-and-such is originally the mind of the Holy Spirit. It is doubtless the mind of the Spirit speaking here by Simeon, that the Lord Jesus shall be a Light to lighten the once darkened Gentiles, but peculiarly the Glory of the Jewish nation. We shall now employ the natural Israel as a type of the Lords elect ones, and surely there is no straining of the text when we say that Jesus Christ is the Glory of the spiritual seed, the redeemed people, who stand to the Lord actually where Israel of old stood in the type.

Jesus Christ is the Glory of His people, His spiritual people Israel. And why, with evident propriety, may the saints of God be compared to Israel? Surely because God has made a Covenant with them as He did with Jacob. Jacob at the foot of the ladder saw a way which led from earth to Heaven. We at the foot of the Cross have beheld the same vision. We see a way from our poor fallen estate up to all the glories of the place where Jehovah dwells. That night a Covenant was made with Jacob. And between God and our own soulsin the Person of the Lord Jesusthere is a blessed compact made which shall stand secure though earths old columns bow.

He will be our God, and we shall be His people. He has made with us a Covenant ordered in all things and sure. This is the great fountain of all our mercies, the ground of all our hopes. Our Covenant God is the delight of our inmost souls, our castle and high tower, our sun and our shield

*He by Himself has sworn.   
I on His oath depend.   
I shall, on eagles wings upborne,   
To Heaven ascend:   
I shall behold His face,   
I shall His power adore,   
And sing the wonders of His grace   
Forevermore.*

We may be compared with Israel, again, because if we are the children of God we have learned to wrestle with the angel and prevail. It is one mark of the heir of Heaven that he understands the value of secret prayer, and that he exercises himself in itthat is to him as stern a reality as wrestling is to the athlete when he seeks to hurl his antagonist to the ground. Not a mumbling of words, but a marshalling of all the powers of manhood to come into contestloving, blessed contestwith God Himself! Well may they be called prevailing princes who are so. Dear Friend, if you are a man of secret prevailing supplication, why need you doubt that you are one of the Lords Israels?

It may be that you have another likeness to Israel in the fact that you are much tried. It is not so sure a token of salvation as some would make it out to be, but yet it is written, Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God. Poor Israel said, All these things are against me, when one after another his beloved children were taken from him and famine was in the land. Perhaps you may be tempted to say the same, and in this you have a likeness to Jacobfrom which I could wish you to escape, for it were better far if, taking all these evils as they come, you could believe the heavenly declaration, All things work together for good, to them that love God.

Faith must be tried. God had one Son without sin but He never had a son without the rod. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. I hope we shall be like Jacob always in our faith, for though he may have distrusted occasionally, yet he was a man of giant faith and has a place in that roll call of heroes in the Epistle to the Hebrews. He blessed the sons of Joseph, leaning upon his staff, and gave commandment concerning the taking away of his bones. He was not content to allow his body to rest in Egypthe looked for the promised land and there, there only, would he have his aged body laid in the graveas if in death he would take possession of the heritage which the Lord had promised to him and to his seed forever.

May you and I have a faith that cannot be satisfied with all the green plains of Goshen, nor the granaries of Egypt, but which longs for the better statethe promised landwhich to the eyes of our body may be invisible, but which to the eye of our faith is clearly revealed! Now, the true Israel, which is spiritually the Church of Christ, are said, according to the text, to be the Lords people. The glory of Your people Israel. Briefly let me remind you, my fellow Believers, of the ties which make us the Lords. Are we not His, tonight, by His eternal choice? You only have I known of all the nations of the earth.

The eternal Father has selected us from among the ruins of the Fall and given us into the hands of Christ that we may be His portion, His bride, His jewels, according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. We are Christs, next, by redemption. He has redeemed us from among men by a special and particular redemption which is peculiar to ourselves. A price has been paid for usan effectual price, which will not permit, for a moment, that the objects so purchased shall ever be lost. You are not your own, you are bought with a price. The saints are redeemed from among men. Thus are you Christs by double bondsthe gift of the Father and the purchase of His own blood. The Father gave you to Jesus and none shall pluck you out of His almighty hands!

You are His, too, this night, by conquest. Admit it. He has struggled with your sins and overcome them. The Spirit of the living God has taken you, as it were, like a lamb from the jaws of the lion. You were led captives by Satan, but Christ met the devil and overcame him in a terrific duel, and you, the once willing captives of the powers of Darkness, are now Christs portion made free and blessed! You are now the possession of your Conqueror, for He took you out of the hand of the enemy with His sword and with His bow. You belong to Christ as the spoil which He has won from death and Hell.

You are His, again, by the voluntary dedication of yourselves to Him. Come, Beloved, is it not so? Will you not confess *Tis done! the great transactions done!   
I am my Lords, and He is mine!   
He drew me, and I followed on,   
Charmed to confess the voice Divine?*

If you feel aright, you will confess that there is not a drop of blood in your veins which does not belong to Jesus, nor a hair on your head which is not His. All the Isle of Man now belongs to Jesus, and you will count it foul scorn that sin should have a lodge within the territories which belong to your liege Lord and Master! From within the triple kingdom of your spirit, soul, and body, you will, to the best of your power, hunt out every rebel against the dominion of your Lord Jesus. You are His tonight, you know you are! You rejoice to confess the blessed impeachment and are willing, before men, angels, and devils, to renew the dedication of yourselves to Him.

And, once again, you are His in conjugal bondsmarried to Him as chaste virgins. His unbounded love espoused you before time began and it has not diminished. He claims you as His own bride, and you call Him the Husband of your souls, and delight to have it so. More than that, you are His in vital union as the members belong to the head. You are in personal, vital, actual

communion with the Son of God! You are thus His in the fullest and most absolute sense. Oh, you will not start back from being altogether His, but come closer and closer to a full surrender and desire to feel more powerfully the fact that you are Christs people, wholly belonging to Himnot in part, not held by a kind of mortgagebut Christs freehold, Christs absolute property!

You bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus and desire to be His, now, and His, world without end. Now, it is to such as these, who are like Israel, and who belong to Christ, that the text shall be addressed tonight. Jesus Christ is the Glory of such. We will pause a moment, and then let us plunge into the center of the text.

I. When we say that Christ is our Glory, we mean that WE GET ALL THE GLORY WE HAVE THROUGH HIM. Some men go to schools for glory, others to the camps of war. In all kinds of places men have sought after honor, but the Believer says that Christ is the mine in which he digs for this goldChrist is the sea in which he fishes for this pearlhe gives up all other searches and looks for Glory in Jesus and nowhere else.

Now, Beloved, we find our adorable Lord to be our Glory tonight, but in what respects? Well, we have the glory, first, of electionof being chosen by God out of the rest of mankindto be a separated people before which imperial pomp grows pale! And this comes to us altogether through Jesus Christ. According as He has chosen us in Him from before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy.

Our next glory is that we are redeemed. It is no small honor for a man to know that God loved Him so well that He gave a price so costly that all Heaven and earth could not match it with anotherthat He gave His only begotten Son that we might be redeemed. Now, Beloved, we are not redeemed except through Jesus Christ. And if it is our glory that we are emancipated todaythat our fetters are all broken, that we are the Lords freemenwe know with what a price we gained this liberty, for we were not free-born. Yes, the glory of the Lords freeman must be only in the Lord Jesus, who is the Son, who by His blood makes as free, indeed.

It is the glory of a Christian that he is adopted, that he is a son of Godbut this, again, is only through Jesus Christ. We are joint heirs with Christ. We have no relation except through His standing at the top of the page in the family register. He is a Son, and we become the many brethren, but only because He condescended to take upon Him our nature and become the first-born among us. Brothers and Sisters, it is a great joy to know, and a great glory to say, I am justified. We can stand upright tonight and say, Who shall lay anything to my charge? Before the court of Kings Bench of Heaven, before the Chancery of the universe, who dare condemns me?

To be pardoned and accepted of God is a matchless privilege. Now, no man can claim justification of a truth except through Jesus Christ, for here is the top and the bottom of a mans justificationthat the righteousness of Christ has been given to him, and that the blood of Christ has washed him. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that has risen again; who sits at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Remember this, my Brethrenwe are accepted, but we are accepted in the Belovedand we are justified, but we are justified in His righteousness. We are a people dear to God, and near unto Him, but all this lies in Jesus Christ. We are comely with the comeliness which He puts upon us, and secure in Gods sight because we are preserved in Christ Jesus.

One part of the Christians glory, and for my part one which I sigh for more and more, is the glory of sanctification. It is a great glory to have a new heart and a right spirit and to pant after holiness, but this also comes by the same royal roadfor we are sanctified through the blood of Jesuswhich the Holy Spirit applies to us. There is not a particle of true sanctity in all the world which does not spring from the Cross! Everything which makes us like Christ first comes from Christ, not from the works of the Law, nor from the strivings of the flesh, nor the teachings of philosophybut altogether

*From the water and the blood   
From the riven side which flowed.*   
If we glory, then, in sanctification, we dare not glory except in Christ Jesus, whose blood has made us priests and kings unto God.   
And, Brothers and Sisters, it is a great glory to a man to know that he

is safe. I love our Arminian friends very heartily, but I should not like to be one of them, myself, for they have such a precarious salvation that they do not know whether it will ultimately save them or not. It will save them if they are faithful, but ah, that unhappy thought is the one dangerous link in the chainand I dare not trust my poor unfaithful soul to such a frail support. They are traveling in a carriage, the axles of which may break before they reach their journeys end! I bless God I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day.

But if a man knows himself, by faith, to be saved, his knowledge is baseless presumption if he rests his safety anywhere but on the immovable rock of the finished work of Jesus Christ! He who can say, Yes, I trust Christ to save me not only today, or tomorrow for He has worked out for me an everlasting salvation. I believe that He will be with me and own my name at the bar of judgmentsuch a man knows that he is resting only in Jesus, and then his glory as to his safety is a glory in Christ, and in Christ alone.

Thus I might continue showing you that there is not a single treasure which a Christian possesses which does not come to him but through Christ. He has nothing in which he can glory but what he is sweetly compelled to say of it, I gained this in the market of Calvary. I found this in the mines of a Saviors suffering. All this came to me through my bleeding, buried, risen, coming Lord, and He shall have the glory of it as long as I live.

II. There is a second meaning to the text, namely thisWE SEE A GLORY IN CHRIST which swallows up all other glories as the suns light conceals the light of the stars. True Believers see Glory, first, in Christs Person. They are often overwhelmed as they contemplate His Godhead and His Manhood Divinely blended. All His attributes strike them as glorious. They cannot think of His Character as He manifested it while here below, or as it is revealed before the Throne above, without falling into raptures of adoring wonder, love, and praise.

If others tell them of the glory of such-and-such philanthropists and able men, the saints reply, We have perceived no glory anywhere comparable with that which gleams in the Character of Christ. Oh, how deeply was Rutherford in love with his sweet, unutterably sweet Lord Jesus! Would to God I were as far gone as he in that heavenly union, communion, and rapture! What expressions he uses! How deep he dips his pen! How glowingly he writes and yet he never exaggerates. It is impossible! Christ is too lovely for us ever to say a word that shall approach half-way to the fullness of His unspeakable excellence and boundless worth! Much less need we ever fear lest we shoot with a bow that shall pass the mark. No, Beloved, our Lords Person is the admiration of the highest intellects that God has ever made, and though angels have been educated in the great science of Christ Crucified these many years, yet

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

Incarnate God is yet beyond them, and still, instead of being wearied with their pursuit, they are students yet, sitting at the feet of the Church of God that there may be made known among principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God! Oh, you shall never see anything so glorious as the Person of the Beloved if your eyes are but once favored to gaze upon Him and your heads but once permitted to lean upon His loving bosom! Brethren, the moon is a blot, and the sun a burnt-out coal compared with our Immanuel!

The saints see a great Glory in the sufferings of Christ. When a base world turns away from the Despised and Rejected, it is then that the regenerate heart clings fastest to Him. Oh, how Divinely the scarlet of His blood becomes Him! Was ever Caesars purple half so glorious? He is bright in Heaven. Be You worshipped forever, Sun of our souls! But if there is a place where, above all others, we would kiss His feet and wash them with our tears, and love Him best of all, it is Calvarys Cross. How our hearts burn when we think of His bearing the load of guilt for us groaning, sweating, bleeding and painfully yielding up His life!

A root out of a dry ground He may be to this blind-eyed world, but to us, Beloved, who have been admitted into the mystery of His inmost heartall over glorious is our precious Lorda miracle of love, the astonishment of earth, the marvel of Heaven, the All in All of our souls! If there were time, we might say that He has been glorious to us in His Resurrection, especially since He has taught us to rise with Him in newness of lifeglorious in His Ascension, now that He is sitting at the right hand of the Fatherespecially now that we have been raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him.

He is glorious in His intercession. What a comfort it is to us to think that our name is on one of the stones of that glorious breastplate! He is glorious, too, in His second advent. We expect Him to come soon. It is earths highest hope, the Churchs most fervent prayer! Come quickly Lord Jesus! To see You we would gladly give up the sight of everything beneath the stars. To see the King in His beauty come riding through the streets! To behold Him with the rainbow wreath and robes of storm! Yes, to have one glimpse of that Great White Throne, though it were but a distance and to hear Him say one wordwas a kind of everlasting Heaven! But for once to have seen Him! But for once to have heard Him!

It might make men content to bear a thousand trials but for once, with heart, and eye, and soul, to drink a full draught of the Glory of Christ. Brethren, our soul fires as we proceed, and we long to praise and sing

*King of kings! Let earth adore Him,   
High on His exalted throne!   
Fall, you nations, fall before Him,   
And His righteous scepter own:   
All the glory   
Be to Him, and Him alone!*

But we must not stop, nor need we tarry. It is enough to have proved it to every Christian heart, though, indeed, it needed no proof, that Jesus Christ is the Glory of His people Israel, in the sense that they shall glory in Him.

III. In the third place, the text is true in the sense that WE GIVE GLORY TO HIM. Alas! Alas! It makes a Christians blood boil to see glory given in a professed place of worship, yes, and in a professed Protestant Church, too, to a pack of scamps who call themselves priests! I would not call them by such a name if they were honest enough to go off to the Church of Rome, where they ought to bebut having the impudent effrontery to attempt to palm themselves off in this country of ours for what they are not, I know of no words bad enough for them!

What reverence or respect is to be paid to those gentry inside those brass gates, around the thing they call an altar? I suppose those gates enclose a sort of holy place into which the poor laity must not go! If these priests had their way, we should have to go down and lick the soles of their feet as our benighted forefathers aforetimes bowed before the hirelings of Rome! Does it not make a man feel, when you see pictures of his holiness and the cardinals, and so on, scattering their benedictions at the Vatican, or at St. Peters, while admiring crowds fall down and worship them, that it were infinitely better to bow to Satan himself?

We give glory unto God, but not a particle of glory to anything in the shape of a man, or an angel, either. Have I not stood and seen the crowds by hundreds fall down and worship images and dressed-up dolls? I have seen them worship bones and old teeth! I have seen them worship a skeleton dressed out in modern costumesaid to be the skeleton of a saint! And I have marveled how we could, in this 19th century, find people so infatuated as to think that such idolatry was pleasing to the most high God! We, Brethren, the people of God who know Christ, can give no glory to this rubbish, but turn away from it with horror! Our glory must be given to Christ, and to Christ, alone.

Now, here is the touchstone to try your religion by. When you pray, to whom do you pray? Through whom do you pray? When you sing, for whom is the song meant? When you preach, to whose honor do you preach? To whom do you intend to do service? When you go out among the poor. When you distribute alms. When you scatter your tracts. When you talk about the Gospelfor whom do you do all this? For, as the Lord lives, if you do it for yourselves, or for any besides the Lord Jesus, you do not know what the vitality of godliness is! Christ and Christ only must be the grand Object of the Christian! The promotion of His Glory must be that for which we are willing to live, and for which, if needs be, we would be prepared to die.

Oh, down, down, down, with everything elsebut up, up, up, with the Cross of Christ! Down with your baptism, and your masses, and your sacraments! Down with your priestcraft, and your rituals, and your liturgies! Down with your fine music and your pomp, and your robes, and your garments, and all your ceremonies! But up, up, up, with the doctrine of the naked Cross, and the expiring Savior! Let the voice ring throughout the whole world, Look unto Me and live! There is life in a look at the Crucified One! There is life in simple confidence in Himbut there is life nowhere else. God send to His Church an undying passion to promote the Saviors Glory, an invincible, unconquerable pang of desire and longing that by any means King Jesus may have His own, and may reign throughout these realms! In this sense, then, Jesus is and must be the Glory of His people.

IV. But there is another sense, namely, FROM JESUS IS REFLECTED ALL THE GLORY WHICH IS PUT UPON HIS PEOPLE. Whatever glory they haveand they have much in the eyes of angels and much honor in the eyes of discerning menit is always the reflection of the Saviors Glory. I know some holy men and women for whom I cannot but feel the deepest and keenest respect, but the reason is because they have so much of my Master about them. I think I would travel many miles to talk with some of them because their speech is always so full of Him and they live so near to Him.

If you take down some of the old books of the Puritans, and others, I know which you will love the best if you love Christ. Why, those that talk of Him! And when you get into the middle of the chapter where some holy man of God is extolling Him, then you will say, He being dead yet speaks, and speaks just that to which my ear would listen. If there should ever be any glory about you, young man, it will have to come through your having much of Christ in you! Believe me, the true path to glory for a Christian is never to try to excel in literary attainments apart from Jesus!

He may lawfully try for that in subservience to the higher aimstill, that must not be his glory as a Christian. It never ought to be the glory of the Christian that he is a good business manhe should be a good business man, but still that is not to be the object of his glory. If you make anything to be your glory except Christ, God will prepare a worm to eat the root of it, for He will have youif you are His, He will have you chaste to Himselfand you shall never have anything to glory in but Christ.

You know, Beloved, this is a trying point with many of us, for I am afraid that sometimes we even get to glory in our ministryand if we do, it will be all over with our usefulness. We must glory in Jesus, and not in our ministry, Oh, said those disciples as they came back, with excited heartsLord, Lord, even devils are subject to us. Ah, said Jesus, Nevertheless, rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven. There is the point. You must come back to thatrejoicing in your own personal salvation through the precious blood of Jesus Christ!

You must rejoice in Him, and then you will think thus: Well, even if my ministry should not prosper, though I hope it will, yet if I have glorified Christ it shall be enough reward for me. If He is lifted one inch higher, it does not matter if I am trod like mire in the streets. If His dear name is but made illustrious, I will be nothing. If no one shall ever lisp my name with approbation, then so be it! Let Your servant be a dog and let him be buried and forgotten so long as King Jesus wears the crown, and men cry, Long live the King!

Oh, this is the Christians great desirethat he may win Christ! And this it is which gives glory to him and makes him esteemed of God to have lived with an unselfish passion for Jesus gleaming in his breastto have lived with so heavenly a brightness shining from his brow, and glittering through his entire life! Thus the true glory of every Christian is His Masters, and comes from Him.

V. But now once more. The text may be read in this senseChrist is the Glory of His people, that is to say, THEY EXPECT GLORY WHEN HE COMES. It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like He is. Our glory is laid up. We are not wearing our Sunday clothes yet. All this is but the weekday garb, and it is very dusty and commonplace. And with many, the poor body is getting very worn out, too. You may well

*Long for evening to undress*

*That you may rest with God,*   
for when you wake up, what a bright suit will be ready for you! Oh, such garments of glory and beauty that you will scarcely know yourselves in them! You will not be like your present selves, you will be like Christ

*Since Jesus is mine   
Ill not fear undressing,   
But gladly put off this garment of clay.   
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing   
Since Jesus to Glory through death led the way.*

When you follow Jesus in resurrection, what glory! But we must not begin to speak of that, for we should never leave off at all if we began to talk about that glorythe glory of perfection, the glory of being delivered from sin, the glory of conquest, having trod Satan under our feet! The glory of eternal rest, the glory of infinite security, the glory of being like Christ, the glory of being in the light and brightness of God, standing, like Miltons angel, in the very sun itself!

If you want to know what Heaven is, you can spell it in five letters! And when you put the five letters together they sound like thisJESUS! That is Heaven! It is all the Heaven the angels round the Throne desire to know. They want nothing better than thisto see His face, to behold His Gloryand to dwell in it world without end!

VI. Thus far have we been led into many precious Truths of Godwe have now done with the doctrinal part of the text, but we must prolong our meditation two or three minutes to speak a little upon THE PRACTICAL DRIFT OF THE SUBJECT.

We have just two or three things to say. We would give a word of warning to those of you who seek your glory anywhere else, because as surely as you do soeven if you meet with honor for a timeyou will lose it. It is always ill to put your treasure where it will be stolen from you. Now, suppose you seek your glory in your learning. Well, well, well! Let the sexton take up your skull after you have been dead a little while and what learning will there be in it? What show of wisdom will be found in it when it is resolved into a little impalpable brown powder? What will your science, and your mathematics, and your classics do for you in death and judgment?

Suppose you seek your glory in fame, and become the favorite of the nation as a great soldier. When the grave-digger rattles your old bones about, what will that signify? You will have great fame, you say, and men will talk about you. Well, will that stop the worms from eating you? Will it give you a single moments repose, if you are found in Hell, to know that there are those on earth who say that you were a famous man? Great men in Hell look very small! Great men in the pit have to suffer as well as othersyes, they endure more of anguish because they were so great and had so many responsibilities.

When you wake up in the Day of Judgment, you graspers of earthly honors will get to reaching for your glory, and trying to find it, you will be like the sleeper who dreamed that he had much gold. He was gathering it up by handfuls, but when he woke he was in a narrow attic in the abode of poverty, and as penniless as when he fell asleep. Ah yes, if you seek your glory anywhere on earth you will lose it, even if for awhile you win it.

But he who has his glory in Christ, when he opens his eyes in the next world will see Christ, and so behold his glory safe and firmly entailed upon Him! There, says he, is my treasure and I have it, have it forever. This is security which no bolts, and iron safes, and Chubbs locks can ever give you! Do but put your treasures into Christ and they are all safe! Even infernal pickpockets shall not be able to take Christ from you! If you win Christ and put your treasure in Him, you are secure! God grant, Brothers and Sisters, that we may be wise for eternity, for all other wisdom is but folly.

Another word, and that is a word of rebuke. There are some preachers we know of, and I suppose there will always be some of the form, who preach, preach, preach, but they never preach what is Israels Glory. They talk of anything but Christ! Oh, how often have I heard the complaint from Christian people, Sir, our minister is a talented man. He is, on the whole, a sound man doctrinally and he preaches to us a great deal about the Gospel. But oh, we wish he would preach the Gospel, not preach about it, but preach the thing itself! O that he would preach Christ!

The best sermons are the sermons which are fullest of Christ! A sermon without Christ is an awful, a horrible thing! It is an empty well! It is a cloud without rain! It is a tree twice dead, plucked by the roots! It is an abominable thing to give men stones for bread and scorpions for eggs, and yet they do so who preach not Jesus! A sermon without Christ? As well talk of a loaf of bread without any flour in it! How can it feed the soul? Men die and perish because Christ is not there, and yet His glorious Gospel is the easiest thing to preach, and the sweetest thing to preachthere is variety in it, there is more attractiveness in it than in all the world besides!

And yet so many will gad abroad and make their heads ache, and turn over those heavy volumes to get something which shall be nothing better than a big stone to roll at the month of the sepulcher, and shut in Christ as though He were still dead! O Brothers, let us, if we cannot blow the silver trumpet, blow the rams hornbut let the blast always be Christ, Christ, Christ! Always let us make the walls ring with the dear name of the exalted Savior, and let us tell men that there is salvation in no other, but that there is salvation and life for them in Jesuslife for them now, life for every soul that looks to Jesusdepending, alone, in Him!

Dear teachers in the school, continue always telling the children about Jesus! Dear Friends who work in any way for the Lords Glory, here is your one topic! The old proverb is, Cobbler, stick to your last, so, Christian, Stick to your text, and let the text be Jesus Christ! Let no glitter or show tempt you away from that. This cool snow of Lebanonbe not taken away to drink of the tepid streams that mock the thirsty soul. This gold of Ophirthere is none like itseek no other! This is the grandest pasture to wander inthis glorious subjectJesus, Jesus, Jesus! Let Him be preached, since HE is the GLORY of Israel!

There are some of you to whom I have a last word to say, and that is, some of you love Jesus Christ but you are ashamed to say so. Now, since He is the Glory of His people Israel, I shall be afraid of you and for you if you do not make Him your Glory. Instead of being ashamed to confess Him and His cause, why, surely you will count it to be your shame that you are ashamed, and you will come forward and say, Yes, I cast in my lot with His people. He is such a blessed Christ. I will never turn my back on Him. If He will but have me, here I am. Put my name down in the Church rollby all means let me be baptized as He was! Let me come to His Table and let me do this in remembrance of Him. He is a dear Lord, and I should not like it to be thought that I was ashamed of Him.

I shall not press it on you, because a word is enough for a heart that is tender. And if you truly love Him, you will not need any drawing forward. You will say, Oh, may He only keep me and make me faithful. I am all too glad to have the opportunity of saying that I am on His sidefor Him I am resolved to live, and if need be, by His Grace, for Him I would be resolved to die.

Do not put it off, then. Come and see the elders of the Church. They will be glad to see you upon the matter, that is to say, if you belong to Christ. If you do not, do not profess to be what you are not! Mind you, do not come forward and say you are Christs if you are not! To you who are not His, let me say, Jesus is to be had for the asking. If you seek Him, He will be found of you. Go not to your rest tonight till you have said, Lord, you are the Glory of Your people. Be my Glory! Give me Yourself! Help me to trust You. And after you have done that, then trust Him, and God bless you, for His own names sake. Amen.

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CHRISTTHE FALL AND RISE OF MANY   
NO. 907

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 26, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

[I thank God most devoutly that I am permitted, once again, to appear in my place among you. It is always a most painful deprivation to me when I am unable to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath to my beloved congregation. I earnestly pray that this long affliction may be for my spiritual growth and that you may all profit by that which my Lord has taught me in the School of the Cross. I beseech you, my dear fellow Helpers, ask of God, as a great favor, that now, upon my return to my accustomed work, a double blessing may rest upon all that is donethat those already saved may be more active and the conversions in our midst may be more numerous. So may God grant it and His shall be the praise.]

*And Simeon blessed them and said unto Mary His mother,*

***Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against.   
Luke 2:34.***

THIS text has within it a profound deep meaning, but I shall not attempt to fathom it. There was a company hired a few months ago for attempting to recover ingots of gold and bars of silver, supposedly lying at the bottom of the sea in a Spanish galleon which sunk some centuries back. My ship is not fitted with the necessary machinery for obtaining gold from mysterious deeps, and I have, moreover, great question as to whether the attempt might not be more dangerous than profitable, for many who vary into the awful depths of predestination have lost themselves. And many more have become unprofitable to the Church and to the world.

My ship is but a little fishing boat whose business it is to fish for the souls of men. My gifts fit me only to be such a coasting vessel as may carry corn from port to port to feed those who hunger for satisfying bread. I shall not, therefore, attempt to enter into the sublime mystery which is contained in this text as to the Divine appointment of Christ to be the occasion of the falling and rising of many souls. I believe in that doctrine, however, though I cannot expound it. I tremblingly believe in Peters words concerning those who stumble at the Word of God, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed. But I say again, though believing the doctrine of predestination in all its length and breadth because I see it revealed in the Word of God, yet as I cannot see any practical result that might come out of a discussion of that subject this morning, I shall leave it for other minds and tongues.

Rather would I conduct you to the practical Truth of God which lies in the text. The great practical doctrine before us is thisthat wherever Jesus Christ comes, with whomever He may come in contactHe is never without influence, never inoperativebut in every case a weighty result is produced. There is about the holy Child Jesus a power which is always in operation. He is not set to be an unobserved, inactive, slumbering Personage in the midst of Israel, but He is set for the falling or for the rising of the many to whom He is known. Never does a man hear the Gospel but he either rises or falls under that hearing! There is never a proclamation of Jesus Christ (and this is the spiritual coming forth of Christ Himself) which leaves men precisely where they werethe Gospel is sure to have some effect upon those who hear it.

Moreover, the text informs us that mankind, when they understand the message and work of Christ, do not regard them with indifference. When they hear the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, they either take it joyfully in their arms with Simeon, or else it becomes to them a sign that shall be spoken against. He that is not with Christ is against Him and He that gathers not with Him scatters abroad. Where Christ is, no man remains neutralhe decides either for Christ or against Him. Given a mind that understands the Gospel, you have before you, also, a mind that either stumbles at this stumbling-stone, being scandalized thereby, or else you have a mind that rejoices in a foundation upon which it delights to build all its hopes for time and for eternity.

Observe, then, the two sides of the Truth! Jesus is always working upon men with marked effectand on the other hand, man treating the Lord Jesus with warmth either of affection or oppositionan action and a reaction being evermore produced. Why is this, do you think? Is it not, first, because of the energy which dwells in the Lords Christ and in the Gospel which now represents Him among men? The Gospel is all life and energy. Like leaven it heaves and ferments with inward energy. It cannot rest till it leavens all around it. It may be compared to salt which must permeate, penetrate and season that which is subject to its influence. Paul compares the preaching of Christ to a sweet-smelling savor.

Now, you cannot say to a perfume, Be quiet! Do not load the air with sweets. Do not affect mens nostrils. It cannot do otherwisethe fragrance must fill the chamber. Even so, Christ must be a savor, either of life unto life, or of death unto deathbut a savor He must be wherever He comes! It is no more possible for you to restrain the working of the Gospel than to forbid the action of fire. Stand before the fireit shall warm and comfort you. But thrust your hand into itit will burn you. Keep that fire in its proper place, it shall yield you abundant service. Cast forth the firebrand, it shall consume your houseit shall devour all that comes in contact with it. You cannot say to fire, Restrain your consuming energy. It must work because it is fire.

And so with yonder sun. Though clouds may hide it from our sight at this moment, yet forever does it pour forth, as from a furnace mouth, its heat and light. Nor could it cease to burn and shine unless it ceased to be a sun. As long as it is a sun it must permeate surrounding space with its influence and splendor. Do you wonder that the Sun of Righteousness is of yet more Divine energy? Do you marvel that the blaze of His Glory blinds His enemies, or His warmth of love dries the tears of His friends? In every case there is a distinct result and a manifest effect! Never does the Gospel return voidit prospers even in that for which the Lord has sent it. Jesus in the Gospel cannot cease to work. My Father works and therefore I work.

The Father, in Providence, pauses not, nor does the Son cease from the work of Divine Grace. Moreover, let it be remembered that Jesus Christ and His Gospel are matters of such prime importance to mankind that from this cause, also, there must always be an effect produced by Christ. Consider other matters that are of prime importance to humanity and my meaning will be clear. Here is the air, I breathe it. What then? Why, I live! I cannot breathe it without obtaining this grand result. The lungs receive the airthe blood is supplied with oxygenlife is sustained. Suppose I refuse to breathe the air, what then? Will there be any remarkable effect produced? Shall I be sickly? Shall I be a little faint? Shall I be somewhat less energetic? No, I must die! Breathing, I live. Refusing to breathe, I die. So the Lord Jesus is as necessary to our souls as the atmosphere to our bodies.

If we receive Christ Jesus we live. We cannot receive Him without living by Him. If we will not receive Him, we must die. It is unavoidable that it should be so. You cannot reject the Savior and be a little damaged. There is no alternative but that you utterly perish. Take another article of human necessity, bread. You shall eat bread, it shall nourish you, it shall provide for you the material of flesh and sinew, nerve and bone. Refuse to eat it and you take your life from you. You may, if you will, try to impose upon others, but, whether watched or unwatched, you shall die if you will not eat. It is so ordained by wise decree that there is no living without foodlet but the space of time be long enough and death must be inevitable to those who will not eat.

So is it with Christ who is the Bread sent down from Heaven. Receive Himyou have all that your soul needs to sustain it and drive away its hunger. Reject Him and there is neither in Heaven nor in earth anything that can supply your souls lack. I might instance the water that we drink, or, indeed, anything else that is not a matter of luxury or of artificial need, but which is absolutely necessary to human life. All such things become operative for good or ill, according as you accept them or reject them. So must it necessarily be with Christ. We may add that the position in which Jesus Christ meets man makes it inevitable that He must have an effect upon them. I shall not speak of the heathen who never hear of Him, nor of our unhappy heathen around us who will not hear of Him.

But concerning you who have heard of Christ, I assert that in your case the Lord Jesus has met with you on occasions where to accept or to refuse was to make a crisis in your being. He was right in your way. It was one Sunday evening when the Holy Spirit was with the preacher. Or it was one day when your father had just been buried. Or, Woman, it was one night when your dear babe had just been taken from your bosom and laid upon the bed of death. You may readily recall the occasion. Christ came right in your way and you could not go around Himyou must either, that night, stumble over Him, make Him to be to yourself a rock of offenseor you must then and there build on Him and accept Him as your souls confidence.

I believe that such a time of decision comes to all hearers of the Word who have at all intelligently heard it. And when the Holy Spirit enables us from that time forth to take the Redeemer to be the ground of our souls confidence, oh, what a joy it is! But if we are left to ourselves to reject Christ, we shall not have rejected Him without a strain upon conscience without having done violence to everything good and true. We shall not have stumbled at Christ without knowing that we were stumbling at the noblest gift of Godat the greatest token of the Fathers lovestumbling at the only thing which could deliver us from the wrath to come and ensure us an eternity of joy. Thus, you see, because Christ comes to us at the important crisis of our life, He, therefore, cannot be indifferent to us.

He must make us either to fall or rise.   
Once again, let me observe that the Lord Jesus was appointed for this very thingso says the textHe was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. It was for this very end He came. See the farmer take the fan. You observe the heap of mingled wheat and chaff lying on the floor. He begins to move the fan to and fro till he has created a breeze of wind. What happens? The chaff flies to the further end of the threshing floor and there it lies by itself. The wheat, more weighty, remains purified and cleansed, a golden heap of grain. Such is the preaching of the Gospel! Such is Christ! He is the Separator of those who will perish from those who shall be saved. The fan discerns and discovers. It reveals the worthless and manifests the precious. Thus has Christ the fan in His hand!   
Or, take another metaphor, which we find in the Prophets, Who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiners fire and like fullers soap. You see the refiners fire? Notice how it burns and blazes. Now, it turns to a white heatyou cannot bear to look on it. What has happened? Why the dross is divided from the silver and the alloy from the gold. The refiners fire separates the precious from the vile. And so the Gospel reveals the elect of God and leaves to hardness of heart the finally impenitent. Where it is preached, the men who accept it are precious ones of God, His elect, His chosen! The men who reject it are the reprobate silver. So shall men call them, for God has rejected them.   
Mark too, the fullers soap. The fuller takes his soap and, exercising his craft upon yonder piece of linen marked with many stains and colors, you see how these foul things fly before the soap and the fair fabric remains. Both spots and linen feel the power of the soap. So does the Gospel take the polluted fabric of humanity and cleanse itthe filth departs and flies before it and the fair linen remains. Such are the saints of Godwhen the Gospel comes to them they are purified, therebywhile the wicked, as foul spots, are driven away in their wickedness. Thus I have shown you that it is not possible for Christ to come anywhere without working some result. I would impress upon each of you that it is not possible for Christ to come to you without effecting a result in you.   
I beseech you never fall into the error of those who assert that unbelief is no sin and that to reject Christ is no fault of yours. The whole tenor of Holy Scripture is contradictory to that most erroneous opinion. I know of hardly anything more likely to lull the conscience to sleep than that delusion. Depend upon it, the Gospel will be a savor of death unto death to you if it is not a savor of life unto life to you. If you believe not, you are condemned already. Why? Hear the voice of God: He that believes on Him is not condemned. But he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, (above all other condemnations), that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.   
You are in a solemn position, this morning, in listening to the Gospel of Christ. You cannot go out of this House without a mark being made upon you which shall remain there evermore either for your good or for your ill. Christ must operate upon your souls. He is set either for your fall or for your rising again.   
Having thus set forth the great Truth of God of the text, I purpose with as much brevity as shall be possible to answer one or two questions.   
I. The first is this, WHO ARE THOSE THAT FALL BY CHRIST? In Christs day the question was not difficult to answer. Those that fell by Christ, were, first of all, the holders of tradition. There were certain persons who always pleaded, It was said by them of old time. They quoted some saying of Rabbi Ben this, or Rabbi Ben thatand these famous sayings were practically exalted above the written Word of Godoften so as to take the very meaning out of the Decalogue itself and make the traditions of men a higher authority than the Commandments of God.   
Now, our Lord Jesus Christ laid the axe at the root of this evil tree, for often and often did He say, It is said by them of old time, but I say unto you. He denounced their making void the Law of God through their traditions. He took a broom and relentlessly swept away the old cobwebs of what the fathers did and what the ancients said and placed the everlasting, it is written, above the authority of antiquity. Much such work is there for Him to do in this, our day, when the use of Sacraments, and the custom of the orthodox churches and I know not what else of venerable rubbish profane the House of God! And, my Brothers and Sisters, He will surely do it and tradition will yet again fall before the Ever-living Word.

There fell, also by our Lords hand the externalists. These men made much of washing their hands before they ate bread. They thought it a great thing to make broad the borders of their garments. They were peculiarly attentive to their phylacteries. They carefully used strainers to keep flies from getting into their wine, lest unclean animals should touch their lips. But the Master in His ministry made short work of them. You blind fools, said He, you strain at gnats and you swallow camels! How He held up to scorn their long prayers and vain pretences, their tithing of cumin and their devouring of widows houses! Never could they forget the simile of the cup and platter, washed outside but foul within, nor that of the whitewashed sepulcher, so fair to the eye and yet so full of rottenness. Woe unto you, said He, Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites.   
And with that word He swept away the whole empire of externalism and made men see the vanity of outward religiousness while the heart is unrenewed. How forcible are those words, Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but joy in the Holy Spirit. O for an hour of our Lords Presence to lash the formalism of today! But be of good cheer, His Gospel will do it yet. The Master, at the same time, made to fall all the self-righteous. They conceived in themselves that they were righteous and they despised others. What a fall He gave to such when He told that famous parable of the Pharisee and the Publican who went up to the temple to pray! How that proud man, who thanked God he was not as other men, went to his house without peacewhile the humble sinner, who confessed himself unworthy to lift his eyes to Heavenwent to his house justified of God!   
Oh, it was a grand sweep the Master made of self-righteousness in the days of His flesh! Why, one would think that where Christ was, the Pharisee must have half-wished to pull off their phylacteries and hide the broad border of their garments! Small matter for their pride was it to stand away and profess to be better than other men, while Jesus of Nazareth tore off the mask and revealed the heart! Jesus our Lord was also the fall of the wiseacres of His day. There were the lawyers. They knew every point. They could discern in a moment what should be and what should not be according to the fathers. And they had a way of reading every precept of Moses so as to make it mean just whatever you might please, according to the depth of your purse.   
Then there were the Scribeswhat diligent students they had been! They knew how many letters there were in the whole Law and which was the middle letter and which the middle word. They knew the size and length of each book and they had written notes, matchless for wisdom, upon every passage. And they were expert in muddling the sense of every passage and making the words mean what they were never intended to teach. Diligent students of the letter these doctors of divinity, these Scribes of Christs day, and yet He nonplussed them with a question so simple that a child should be able to answerDavid in your Law called the Messiah, Lord. How is He then his Son? They could not reply to Him. And if they had been able, with all their wisdom, to answer that one question, yet could He have asked them many more by which their ignorance would have been discovered.   
He was their fall, as He will be at this day the fall of all the boastfully wise, for, He takes the wise in their own craftiness. But if our Lord was thus the fall of those who were externally religious, who were selfrighteous, who were merely orthodoxHe was also the fall of the broad Church as well as of the high Church. What a fall He gave the Sadducees! These were your broad churchmen. They professed to believe the Law of Moses, but robbed it of its supernatural element. And yet they continued in the then established Church. Of course they did! Why should not the national Sanhedrim be of the most comprehensive character? Yet these skeptics declared that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit!   
When our Lord came into the arena against them, their famous story of the woman with the seven husbands was snapped like a wooden sword and the point of an irresistible weapon was set at their breasts as Jesus asked them whether the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was the God of the dead or of the living! Our great Leaders triumph over the skeptical faction was as complete as that achieved over the ritualistic bandto each He gave a crushing fall! If it is easy to answer the question, Who fell by Christ in His lifetime? It is not difficult to answer the enquiry, Who falls by Christ today? Why, very much the same sort of people as fell by Him then! If any of you are trusting in the externals of religion. If you are strangers to the inner spiritual life. If you are depending upon your confirmation, your baptism, your reception of the sacrament, or anything of ceremony, assuredly Christ will be the fall of you!   
Hear His own words, You must be born again. If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. Though you may receive the baptism of Christ and the supper of Christ as often as you will, without His Spirit, you are lost! If there are any here who are confident in their own excellence. If you are hoping to enter Heaven because you have never done any great harm and have, on the whole, been very good peopleamiable, and kind and generousChrist will be the fall of you! Continuing as you are now, His Gospel condemns you thoroughly. For what says that Gospel? By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified. Why, then, should you hope to be justified, in the teeth of what Christ, by His Inspired Apostle, has declared? Christ is the death of self-righteousness and you will most assuredly perish, if self is your reliance.   
Some will tell you that human nature is not at all so bad as it is said to be in Scripturethere are some fine points about man which only need opportunities of development. Ah, but if man were not fallen, why did he need a Savior? If man were not hopelessly fallen, why need God have come down from Heaven to take upon Himself human flesh to redeem man? You who praise up human nature are robbing Christ of Glory to crown a dying rebel! And rest assured that such robbery will be your ruin unless repented of. There are others who say let man do his best and he will, no doubt, be accepted of God. They hope that there is enough of strength in man to enable him to force his way to that which is desired of him.   
If so, why that bleeding Sacrifice? What necessity for Calvarys groans and death-pangs? The Sacrifice of Christ is the death of all hopes of selfsalvation. If you could save yourself, it were monstrous that Christ should come to save you! I tell you if you hold to self-reliance, Christs Cross will be the fall of you! It will be a condemning witness against you! Moreover, Jesus is the fall of all who rely upon priests, or who profess to be priests. When the Son of God has appeared as the Priest of fallen humanity, oh, how dare you, you curs and dogs who yelp at the heels of Antichrist, to claim to be what Jesus, alone, is! How dare you take upon yourselves to stand at the altar when He is there! Now that the Sun of Righteousness has risen, we cannot, dare not, trust in such mere blots of darkness as you are!  
All persons who are self-contented. All those who are lofty in mindto these Christ will assuredly give a dreadful fall. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be laid low. Every look of pride will He abase, for He is set for the fall of all those, whether in Israel or among the Gentiles, who exalt themselves in the face of the Lord of Hosts. Judge you, Sirs, whether He will be your fall! You can readily tell. He that is down need fear no fall! But he that is on high may tremble lest the Child who was born in Bethlehem should be his fall.   
II. But I must pass on. Another and a happier question suggests itself. To WHOM WILL THE LORD JESUS BE A RISING AGAIN? He will be a rising again to those who have fallen. Do you confess, I have fallen? Do you acknowledge, I possess a fallen nature? Do you lament you have fallen into sin? O my Brothers and Sisters, He will be your rising! He cannot uplift those who are not brought low. But if you have fallen and are conscious of it this day, He is set to be the rising again of such as you are.   
Again, are you conscious of being down? There cannot be a lifting to those who are upthere cannot be healing to those who are not sick. Christ came not for so preposterous a purpose as to be the Savior of those who are already safe. Are you sick? He was set to heal such as you are. Are you down? Then the more desperate your fall, the deeper your sense of degradation, the more I will rejoice! If you call yourself the chief of sinners, I shall but be the more thankful. And if you feel yourself past all hope, I shall congratulate you as a prisoner of Hope, for He came to be the rising again of such as you are! Clearly to everybodys common sense the rising is not for those who are already up, but for those who are in need of raising. They shall rise in Him!   
Note, again, those that rise in Him are those who are now willing to rise in Him. He saves none while they are unwilling, but He makes men willing in the day of His power. Are you willing this day to rise in Christ? That gracious will came from God! That will is an indication that Jesus is set to raise you up. Never did a soul cling to Christ with earnest will to rise and find that Christ did leave it to perish! Only lay hold of the hem of His garment and He will lift you up to His own Glory! We have heard of drowning men who have clutched at others who could barely save themselves, but could not support another and have therefore been compelled to throw off those who clung to them. But you may cling to Christ without fear! He is an almighty swimmer and will bear to land every soul that lays hold on Him.

Trembling Believer in Jesus the Redeemer, you shall rise from your poverty to sit among princes! You shall rise from the dunghill of your sins to reign with angels! You shall rise from your spiritual death to newness of life! You shall rise from the shame of your sin to the honor of perfection! You shall rise to be children of God, educated and trained for a better world! You shall rise to dwell in the many mansions of your Fathers house! You shall rise to oneness with Christ and shall enter into His joy, triumphing with Him!   
But all this is not for those who have a high esteem of themselves, but for those who lament their own unworthiness and sinfulness. He still has a frown for the haughty and a smile for the lowly. 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.   
III. Another matter shall occupy us for a moment. Some of the best critics of modern times differ entirely from the older expositors and think that the, and, here used is conjunctive and not disjunctive. That is to say, that the two words describe but one character, whereas, older commentators and, as I believe, rightly, interpret the words of two classes of persons. However, let us include that other sense in our exposition. This Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israelthat is to say there are some who shall both fall and rise again in Christto whom Christ shall give such a fall as they never had before and such a rise as shall be to their eternal resurrection.   
Let me give you a picture. You remember Jacob and the angel wrestling at night? Did you ever, yourself, experience what it was to wrestle with Christ? I do remember when He met me and entered into gracious conflict with my rebellious spirit. I stood erect in pride and as good as told Him that I had no need of a Savior. But He wrestled with me and would not let me go. I stood foot sure, as I imagined, on the Law, but what a fall He gave me when He revealed its spiritual nature and proved me guilty at every point! Then I thought I had firm footing with one foot on the Law and the other upon His Graceimagining that partly by the mercy of God and partly by my own endeavors I might be saved. But what a fall was there when I learned that if salvation was of works, it could not be of Graceand if it was of Grace it could not be of worksthe two could not be mixed together.   
Then I said I would hope in the performance of the duties which the Gospel inculcatesI thought I had power to do thisI would repent and believe and so win Heaven. But what a fall I had and how each bone seemed broken when He declared to me, without Me, you can do nothing. No man can come unto Me, except the Father who has sent Me draw him! Do you remember, Brothers and Sisters, when you lay before Christ and the Gospel, all broken and bruised, till there was no life in you except the life that could suffer pain and even that you questioned, for you feared you did not suffer enough pain? You felt you were not penitent enough, nor believing enough and that you could not make yourself anything other than you were. You were hopeless and helpless.   
Ah, this is how Christ saves souls! He gives them a fall first and afterwards He makes them rise. You cannot fill the vessel till it is empty. There must be room made for mercy by the pouring out of human merit. You cannot clothe the man who is clothed already, or feed him who has no hunger. It is the hungry soul that is filled. It is the naked soul that is clothed. It is the fallen one that is lifted up. But this fall which Jesus gives us is a blessed fall! He never did throw a man down without lifting him up afterwards. I kill and I make alive. I wound and I healthese are the attributes of Jehovah Jesus. The text says after the fall shall come the rising again. I have explained what that is and I hope you understand it.   
If you this day are enabled to lay hold of Jesus Christ by simply trusting Him, you are already raised up through Him. He who trusts Christ is forgiven. He is accepted. He is savedand low as you may have fallen in your own esteem through the fall which the Truth of God has given you, you may rise just as high in the union that you have with Christ, for you are accepted in the Beloved! And there is, therefore, now no condemnation to you. Heaven is your sure portion! You shall be with Christ where He is!   
IV. We shall conclude with a few words upon the last part of the text. The text tells us that the Lord Jesus is, A SIGN THAT SHALL BE SPOKEN AGAINST. What is He a sign of? The Lord Jesus Christ is a remarkable sign and the only sign I know of that was ever spoken against. He is a sign of Divine love. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. There never was such a sign of Gods love to man as when God gave His own Son for him. Now there have been many other signs of Gods love and men have not spoken against them. The rainbow was in some respects a sign of His lovethat He would no more destroy the world with a flood.   
The sun is a sign of Gods love to man and so is the moon. He makes the sun to shine by day and the moon by night, for His mercy endures forever. A fruitful harvest, a flowing stream, a refreshing windthe common mercies of lifethese are all signs of Gods benevolence. Nobody speaks against them! But the grandest sign of benevolence on Gods part was when He spared not His own Son! But listen to the babble, the noise and confusion of tongues, like the voices of many waters, as the nations cry, This is the heir, let us kill Him. Away with Him! Away with such a Fellow from the earth! It is not fit that He should live! Oh, prodigy of human malice! God reaches the climax of benevolence and man exhibits the climax of deadly hate! The greatest gift provokes the greatest hostility and the loftiest sign brings forth the most virulent opposition!   
Christ was a sign of Divine justice. A bleeding Savior. The Son of God deserted by His Father. The thunderbolts of vengeance finding a target in the Person of the Well-Belovedherein is justice revealed most fully! I hear not that other signs of vengeance have been spoken against. Men have trembled, but have not railed. Sodom and Gomorrah, with bowed head, confessed the justice of their doom. Egypt, engulfed in the Red Sea, says nothing of it. None of her records contain a single blasphemy against Jehovah for having swept away the nations chivalry. The judgments of God, as a rule, strikes men dumb with awe! But this, which was the greatest display of Divine hatred of sin, where the Son of God was made to descend into the lowest depths as our Substitutethis provokes, today, mans uttermost wrath! Know you not how many are continually railing at the Cross? The Crucified is still abhorred! How matchless is the perversity of human nature that when God displays His justice most, but blends it sweetly with His love, the sign is everywhere spoken against!   
Let me close where much more might be said, by observing that Christ was the sign of mans communion with God and of Gods fellowship with man. None ought to have spoken against that. It ought to be mans greatest joy that there is a ladder that reaches from earth to Heaventhat there is a connecting bridge between creature and Creator. But man does not want to be near his God, and therefore he rails at the means provided for communion! Christ is the sign of the elect seed. He is the womans Seed, the Head of the covenanted people and this is, perhaps, the main ground of oppositionfor the serpent must always hate the Seed of the woman. God has put an enmity between them. Jesus is the representative of the holy, the new-born, the spiritual. He is the sign of the elect of God, and therefore, as soon as the carnal mind that knows not God, nor loves Him, perceives Christ and His Gospel, it at once stirs up the depth of its malevolence to put Christ down if it is possible.   
Brothers and Sisters, they shall never put Him down! They may speak against the Gospel, but here is our joythat Christ will raise up His people and will certainly give the fall to His enemies. It is one of the proven facts of Providence that no lie is immortal. Never be afraid that any error can long be dominant. The Ark of the Lord can never fall before Dagon but Dagon must fall down before the Lords Ark. Have patience, have patience! The victory is as sure as it is slow. You may complain that the Ritualists gather force. Have patience! The Lord shall laugh them to scorn. The Lord shall have them in derision. You may say that the doubters as to the truth of Gods Word are gathering in strength. But wait with patienceskepticism shall have its overthrow. Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.   
The Lord God has declared the decree and the decree shall stand. Be of good cheer, for all is well! Inasmuch as you have risen in Him, be not dismayed though the sign is spoken against. In patience possess your souls, for the day shall come when He will ease Him of His adversaries, when the loftiest foe shall be hurled to the groundfor He shall dash them in pieces, He shall rule them with a rod of ironHe shall break them like a potters vessel. O come you who want to be on His side, you who would be safe! 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.   
Come, you tremblers, cower down beneath the wings of your Savior who says today, as He did in the days of His flesh, How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings and you would not! Refuse Him not, lest He be unto you a swift flying eagle that scents the prey from afar and descends with terrible vengeance to tear in pieces and to destroy!   
The Lord grant that the Child Jesus may be set for your rising again and for a sign in which your souls shall delight, for His names sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONLuke 2.**   
END OF VOLUME 15   
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SUPPOSING HIM TO HAVE BEEN IN THE COMPANY   
NO. 1724

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, JUNE 3, 1883, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Supposing Him to have been in the company.   
Luke 2:44.**

ALL who were present on the occasion are sure to remember our meditation upon, Supposing Him to Be the Gardener [Sermon #1699, Volume 29.] Although it was only supposition and evidently a mistake, yet it yielded us most profitable thought. Here is another supposition, again a mistakea mistake which yielded a good deal of sorrow to those who made itand yet in the hands of Gods Spirit, it may bring forth profitable instruction to us as we think it over.

I. We will begin our discourse by saying THAT THIS WAS A MOST NATURAL SUPPOSITION. That the Child, Jesus, should have been in the company returning to Nazareth was a most likely thing. When the Jews came up from their different allotments, once each year to Jerusalem, they formed family groups at their first starting and then, as they got a little on the road, these groups combined and made larger bands. And as the roads approached to Jerusalem, the people gathered into great caravansthus they went up to the House of God in company. It must have been a delightful season, especially if they sang those Psalms of degrees which are supposed to have been written for such pilgrims. What with prayer, praise, holy conversation and with the prospect of meeting together in Jerusalem, they must have been happy bands of pilgrims!

It was natural enough then, when all was over at Jerusalem, the Child, Jesus, should return home. His parents knew that when they were ready to return, He would be ready to go with them. But failing to meet with them, they figured He would join the company with which He came and so go back to Nazareth. His parents did not expect to find Him wandering alonethey looked for Him in the company. Jesus was a child who loved society. He was not stoical and thus selfishly self-contained and He was not sullen, avoiding society. He did not affect singularity. In the highest sense, He was singular, for He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, but throughout His life He never aimed at singularity either in dress, food, speech, or behavior.

He grew up to be a Man among men, mixing with them, even at weddings and funeralsno man was more truly human than the Man, Christ Jesus. It is to be believed that as a Child He was like other children in all things but sin. Even as a Man, He was like other men in all but evil. Jesus was not one whose company would be shunned because of His ill mannersrather would it be courted because of the sweetness of His disposition. He would not make Himself disagreeable and then crown that disagreeableness by stealing away from those whom He had vexed. They knew the sweetness of their dear Childs Character and the sociableness of His disposition and, therefore, they supposed Him to have been in the company.

This supposition would even more readily occur to us, knowing what we know about Him, which is more than His parents knew. For we know that of old His delights were with the sons of men. We know that He often came among men in angel form before His Incarnation and that when He came into the world He came seeking men. As a Man, He never seemed happier than when He was in the midst of His disciples, or surrounded by publicans and sinners, or feeding famishing crowds. He was so great a lover of mankind that He loved to be in the company. Living and working in such a city as this, with all its millions, the burden is enough to break ones heart as we consider the citys sins, its irreligion, its neglect of God. It is sweet to hope that He who loved to be in the company, when He was here, will certainly come and bless these throngs of men!

If ever a physician was needed, it is in this vast hospital. If ever a shepherd was needed, it is among these perishing sheep. Jesus has such a love to the sons of men and such a wish to gather them to Himself, that even now His redeeming work is done! He is still always with us. He has been lifted up and now He draws all men to Himself and, therefore, we expect to find Him in the center of these throngs. Those who go into the dense masses of humanity may expect this same Jesus to be with them in full power to save. Rescue the perishing and He will be in the company! It was a most natural supposition because of the sweetness and friendliness of His temper, that His parents would find Jesus in the company.

They never suspected that He would be found in any wrong place. No thought ever crossed their minds that He would be found in any haunt of vice, or in any assembly of vanity, though such could have been found in Jerusalem. We expect to meet our Lord and the throng of perishing men and women, seeking and saving thembut we know that we shall not find Him among those who find pleasure in noisy laughter and lawless mirth. We never look for Jesus in the theater or the drinking saloonit would be profanity to suppose Him there!

We never look for Him where a question of morals might be raised, for He is undefiled. We expect to find Him where His people meet for worship. We look for Him where honest men are laboring hard for their daily bread, or where they are suffering His Fathers will, but we never dream of His being found where the world, the flesh and the devil hold supreme control. Let His example be followed by us! Let us never go where our Master would not have gone. There are some places where we cannot suppose Him to have beenin those places let it not be supposable that we can be! Let us go only where we can remain in fellowship with our Divine Master and where we should be happy to be found if He were suddenly to come in His kingdom.

Let us judge of where we may go by enquiring, Would Jesus have gone there? and if He would not have gone, let our feet refuse to carry us that way.

II. But, secondly, THIS SUPPOSITION BROUGHT THEM GREAT SORROW, from which I gather that we ought, with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, to leave nothing as a matter of supposition. By supposing Him to have been in the company, they were made to miss Him and to seek Him, sorrowing for three days. Why did they lose sight of Him at all? Why did they not abide with Him? We may not blame them, for He did notbut, at any rate, they fell into days and nights of trouble by supposing something about Him. Do not suppose anything about Jesus at all. Do not suppose anything about His Character, His doctrines or His workgo in for certainty on such points.

I have heard of a German who evolved a camel out of his own inner consciousness. What kind of a camel it was, I do not knowbut many persons evolve a Christ out of their own imaginations. Do not do it! If you do this, you will make yourselves a Christ nothing like Jesusit will be a mere imagea false Christ, an idol Christ. No human thought could ever have invented our Savior! We put it to all those who doubt the Inspiration of the four Evangelistswould they kindly write us a fifth gospel? Could they even suggest another action of Jesus which would fit into the rest and be of the same order? They cannot do it!

The whole conception of Jesus is original and Divine. It is not possible that the most ingenious fancy can add anything to the life of Christ which would square with that which is recorded. If you chance to read the Prot Evangelism, or the Gospel of the Infancy which are spurious narratives of the Childhood of Jesus, you will throw them into the fire and say at once, These do not fit in with the records of the true Evangelists. These stories are ludicrously unlike the Child, Jesus. In fact, all the books which pretend to be a part of the canon will be detected and rejected at once by the simplest reader who is thoroughly versed in the four Evangelists. Do not, therefore, suppose anything concerning Jesus, but read the Word of God and see what is revealed about Him.

Never clip the Kings coin, but accept it as it is minted in all its purity and preciousness. Add not to the perfect Word of God, lest plagues be added to you. What the Holy Spirit has written concerning the Man, Christ Jesus, the everlasting Son of God, receive humbly and do not import suppositions into your theology. This has been the cause of the division of the Church into sectsthe bones of contention have not been revealed Truths of God, but imagined fictions! I may invent one theory and another man, another, and we shall each fight for his theory. An hypothesis is set up and supported by the letter of Scripture, though not by the spirit of itand straightway men begin to differ, dispute and divide. Let us lay aside all suppositions, for these things will only bring us sorrow in the end. Let us believe in the real Jesus as He is revealed in the Scriptures and as the Holy Spirit graciously enables us to behold Him in the glass of the Word of God. Supposing Him to have been in the company. This supposition caused Jesus parents great sorrow.

Again, I say, Beloved, do not take anything about Jesus at haphazard and perhaps. Let this Truth apply to your personal dealing with Him, as, for instance, do not suppose Him to be in your hearts. Do not suppose that because you were baptized in infancy you are, therefore, in Christ and Christ in you. That is a dangerous supposition! Do not say, But I have been baptized as a professed Believer and, therefore, Jesus is in my heart. The inward Grace is not tied to the outward sign! Water Baptism does not convey the Spirit of God. Blessed are they who, having the Spirit, can use the ordinance to their profit, but do not suppose that the Grace of God is tied to any outward rite.

Do not say, I have eaten at the communion table and, therefore, Jesus is in my heart. You may eat and drink at His table and yet never know Himand He may never know you. Outward ceremonies convey no Grace to graceless persons. Do not take it for granted that because you are admitted into a Christian Church, and are generally accepted as being a Believer, that, therefore, you must be so. I dread lest any of you should think your Church membership to be a certificate of salvation! It was not given to you with that viewwe judged favorably of your conduct and professionbut we could not read your heart! Do not even

suppose that Grace must necessarily be in your souls because you have been professing Christians for a great many years, for the lapse of the will does not turn falsehood into truth!

It is difficult to know how long hypocrisy can be kept up, or how far a man may be self-deceived. It is even possible that he may die with his eyes blinded through the exceeding deceitfulness of sin. Do not suppose that Jesus is in your heart because you are an elder, or a deacon, or a pastor! I will not make any supposition in my own case, for woe is unto me if, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway! Such things have happenedJudas was one of the Twelve. Men have been sweet of voice and yet bitter of heartthey have been taught in the Word of God as to the letter, but they have not known the power of the everlasting Spiritand so they have perished!

Verily, I say unto you, in Christs name, unless the Spirit of God actually rests upon each one of us personally, it will be all in vain for us to suppose that He is in our hearts because of professions and ordinances, for the supposition may be a damning falsehood and may lull us into a fatal slumber. How terrible to be taken out to execution with our eyes bandaged by a supposition! Again, dear Friends, do not ever suppose that Christ is in our assemblies because we meet in this house. Do not go up to a place of worship and think Jesus is sure to be there. He may not have been there for many a day! Is it not sad that out of the tens of thousands of assemblies held on this day there will be many in which Jesus will not be presentfor His Gospel will not be preached, or if preachedit will not be set forth in the living power of the Holy Spirit! Christ is not present where He is not honored.

All your architecture, all your millinery, all your music, all your learning, all your eloquence are of small account. Jesus may be absent when all these things are present in profusion. And then your public worship will only be the magnificent funeral of religion, but the life of God will be far away! It brings great sorrow in the long run to a Church if they take it for granted that Jesus must be among them. Our question every Sunday morning ought to be, What do you think, will He come to the feast? If He does not come to the feast, it will be the mockery of a festival, but no bread will be on the table for hungry souls. We must have our Lord in our company or we will break our hearts over His absence! We desire His Presence even in the smallest Prayer Meeting and in our minor gatherings when we meet to consult as to His work. If He awakens us by His Spirit and reveals to us that He was not in our former meetings, we will seek Him sorrowing, as His father and mother did.

Once more, let us not take it for granted that the Lord Jesus is necessarily with us in our Christian labors. Do we not, too often, go out to do good without special prayer, imagining that Jesus must surely be with us as a matter of course? Perhaps we thus conclude because He has been with us so long, or because we feel ourselves fully equipped for the occasion, or because we do not even think whether He is with us or not. This is perilous! If Jesus is not with us, we toil all the night and we take nothing. But if Jesus is with us, He teaches us how to cast the net and a great multitude of fish are taken! If Jesus is not with us, we are like Samson when his hair was shornhe went out as at other times thinking to smite the Philistines hip and thigh, as he had done before, but as Watts puts it, he

*Shook his vain limbs with vast surprise, Made feeble fight and lost his eyes.*   
So shall we be defeated if we imagine that we can succeed without

fresh Divine assistancethe fact being that we ought to seek the Lord in prayer before the smallest Christian engagementand then we may reap in it the most important result of our lives. You are going to see a poor bedridden old woman. Do not attempt to comfort this Kings daughter without first seeking the Presence of the Consolation of Israel. You are going to teach your Sunday school class this afternoon. You have done it so many times that you eat your lunch and walk off to the school scarcely thinking enough about what you are doing to breathe a prayer for your Lords help! Is this right? Can you afford to waste one single Sunday afternoon, or one opportunity to speak for Jesus? And yet, it will be wasted if He is not with you.

Some of your children may be dead before next Sunday, or never come to the class again! Go not, even once, without your Lord. Do not sit down to teach as if you had Jesus at your command and were sure that of necessity He must succeed your endeavors! He will withdraw from us if we fall into a careless, prayerless habit. Why was He not with His mother that day? Truly He had to be about the business of His heavenly Father, but why did He permit His human mother to miss Him? Was it not because she needed to be taught, as well as the rest of us, the value of His company? Perhaps if we never missed Him, we might not know how sweet He is!

I can picture Mary, when she had lost the dear Child, weeping floods of tears. Then she began to understand what old Simeon meant when he said, Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own heart, also. The sword was piercing her heart, even then, to prepare her for three other days in which she would mourn Him as dead with still bitterer grief. See how she enquired everywhere, Have you seen Him? She reminds me of the spouse in the Song, Have you seen Him whom my soul loves? I think I see her going through the streets and saying, at the close of the day, I sought Him, but I found Him not. Everywhere the same question, Have you seen Him whom my soul loves? But she gets no tidings of Him. Peace is all unknown to her till she finds Him.

But, oh, how precious He was in her eyes when, at last, she discovered Him in the Temple! How careful she was of Him afterwards. How happy to think that no harm had come to her dear charge! If you and I ever lose the society of Christ in our service, we will go to Him, and cry, My Lord, do not leave me again! What a fool I am if You are not my wisdom! How weak I am if You are not my strength! How worse than silent I am if You are not my mouth to me! How heartless is all my talk and how flat it falls upon the hearers ears, if You are not the spirit and the life of all my speaking! Oh, if all our preaching and teaching were in the power of the Presence of our Divine Master, how different it would be!

Do then, learn the lesson, Brothers and Sisters, as I desire to learn it for myself, that we must not take anything for granted about Jesus. We must make sure work concerning eternal things, for if these are allowed to slip, where are we? Grasp the Truth of God and know that it is the Truth of God! Never be satisfied with ifs, and buts, and, I hope so, and, I trust so, but make sure of Christ! If you are not sure about the health of your body, yet be sure about your being in Christ and so healthy in soul! If you are not sure about the solvency of your firm; if you are not sure about the deeds of your estate; if you are not sure about your marriage, yet at least be sure that you have Jesus within your heart! If you have any doubt, today, give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids until the Holy Spirit, Himself, has sealed upon your spirit the certainty that Jesus is yours! Thus have I used the supposition in two ways.

III. Now for a third lessonTHE SUPPOSITION made by these two good people MAY INSTRUCT US. Let us use it as this, then, and turn to, Supposing Him to have been in the company. I speak now to children who are hearing this sermon. This is for you. Jesus was about 12 years old and you are of much the same age. Suppose He had been in the company returning to Nazarethhow would He have behaved Himself? Think of Jesus as an example for yourselves. I am sure, when the whole company sang a Psalm, that bright-eyed Boy would have been among the sweetest singers! He would have sung most heartily the praises of God, His Father! There would have been no inattention or weariness in Him when God was to be praised. You would have numbered the Holy Child among the most devout worshippers.

Therefore, dear children, whenever you come in among Gods people, give your whole hearts to the worshippray with us and sing with us and endeavor to drink in the Truth of God which is spoken, for so will you be like the holy Jesus. Let all boys and girls pray that among Gods people they may behave as Jesus would have done. I feel persuaded that Jesus would have been found in that company listening to those who talked of holy things! Especially would He have been eager to hear explanations of what He had seen in the Temple.

When the conversation turned upon the Paschal lamb, how that dear Child, who was the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world, would have listened to it! I think I see His sweet face turned towards those who spoke of the sprinkled blood. He would surely have said, What do you mean by this ordinance? He would have been anxious to share with the grown-up people all the solemn thoughts of the day. So whenever you come up to the House of God, try and learn all that you can from all the teaching of Gods Word. Seek good company and learn by it. Have a deaf ear to those who speak wickedly, but always be ready to listen to everything about your God, your Savior, your faith and the Heaven where you hope to dwell.

I feel sure, also, that if He had been in the company going home, He would have been the most obliging, helpful, pleasing child in all the companyif anybody had needed to have a burden carried, this Boy of 12 would have been the first to offer! As far as His strength allowed, if any kindly deed could be done, He would be first in doing it. He grew in favor both with God and men because He laid Himself out to be everybodys servant. Marys Son won the love of all around, for He was so unselfish, kind, gentle and willing. He did all that He could to make others happy and blessed are those boys and girls who learn this lesson well. Oh, children, you will be happy if you live to make others happy! Act thus to your parents, brothers and sisters, friends and schoolfellowsand you will, in this, be like Jesus.

I am sure, also, that Jesus would not have done in that company as too many boys are apt to do. He would not have been mischievous, noisy, annoying and disobedientbut He would have been a comfort and delight to all about Him. No doubt but He would have been the liveliest and most cheerful boy in the whole company, yet He would not have been rough, coarse, willful, or cruel. There would have been no quarreling where He wasHis very Presence would have bred peace among all the children that were with Him. I should like you to think over all that Jesus would have done and would not have done. And then I should be glad to see you acting as He did. Take this little word home with you, dear children. Ask yourselves often, What would Jesus do? For what Jesus would have done is the best rule for you.

And now to you elder folks, supposing Him to have been in the company, and you had been in the company, I will warrant there is not one father or mother but what would have been willing to care for Him. Every matron here says, I would have taken Him under my wing. You say that honestly, do you not? You mean it, I am sure. Well, you have an opportunity of proving that you are sincere, for Jesus is still in our company. You can find Him in the form of the poor. If you would have watched over Him, relieve their needsdo it to the least of these, and you have done it unto Him. You can find Jesus in the form of the sickvisit them. I wish more of Gods people would addict themselves to calling upon the sick, visiting them in their homes and cheering them in their needs.

As you say you would have taken care of Jesus, prove it at once by remembering His Words, I was sick and you visited Me. If you would have taken care of Jesus, you can show it by caring for the young, for every young child comes to us under the guardian care of Him who said, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not. You that spend your leisure in seeking to bless the young are proving that if you had been in that company, you would have taken care of the Child, Jesus. Above all, consider the orphans! For, had He been in that company, He would have been practically an orphan, for He would have lost, for a while, both father and mother. Many among you have such fond maternal hearts that you would have said, I must look after that bright, beautiful Boy who is now without parents. Evidently He has lost them. Come here Child, come here!

You would have felt a joy to have kissed Him and folded Him to your bosom. Prove it by looking after orphan children wherever they areand let each represent to you the Jesus of that day as He would have been had His parents supposition been correct. Let us see that the love you feel to Jesus when you read your Bibles is not mere emotion or sentiment, but that practical principle lies at the back of it and affects your life and conduct. So far have we gone and I hope not altogether without profit. May the Spirit of God help us yet further.

IV. But now I change the line of our thought altogether for a little while. Forget the Child Jesus, now, and let me use the words concerning Jesus in the fullness of His power. SUPPOSING HIM TO BE IN OUR COMPANY IN ALL HIS GRACIOUS INFLUENCE, what then? Then, Brothers and Sisters, first, how happy will such company be! For with Christ known to be in their company, saints cannot but be glad! You may have seen a picture representing certain of the martyrs sitting together in prison. They are to be burned, by-and-by, and they are comforting each other. Now, supposing Him to have been in their company, as I doubt not He was, I could wish to have been there even at the price of sharing their burningwouldnt you?

Or look, a few poor people met together in a cottage talking about Jesus, as people seldom do nowJesus is there and their hearts are burning within them! How favored they are! If their hearts might otherwise have been sad, yet supposing Him to be in the companyhow restful all the mourners becomehow light every burden grows, how every aching heart rejoices, for in His Presence there is fullness of joy! Get but Christ into your family circle and it is a ring of delight! Supposing Jesus to be in the company, next how united His people will all become! Whenever Christian people fall out, it is because Jesus is not in their company. Whenever there is a lack of love; whenever there is a lack of forbearance; when people fall to fault-finding and quarrelling, one with the other, my heart says to me, Supposing Him to have been in the company, they would not have acted so.

They would have looked at Him and straightway have forgiven one another! No, they would hardly have had need to forgive, for they would neither have given nor taken offense, and their hearts would have flowed together in one common stream. The sheep are scattered everywhere upon the hills till the Shepherd comes! They know His voice and they gather to Him! Jesus is the center and the source of unity and when we have Him reigning in His full glory in the midst of the Church, divisions and schisms will cease to be. Supposing Him to have been in the company, how holy they would all grow! Sin dies as Jesus looks upon it and mens wayward passions yield to His sweet sway. How devout would all hearts be, supposing Him to be in the company!

What prayer there is and what praise! There is no hurrying over morning devotion, no falling asleep at the bedside at night when Jesus is in our company! Then our heart is praying all day long and we delight to pray together for His coming and His kingdom. How teachable we are, too, when Jesus is in the company, opening the Scriptures and opening our heartswhat sweet communion we enjoy. How souls go out to His soul and hearts to His heartand how fine we knit together in the one Christ! How happy, how united, how holy is the company supposing Jesus to be in it! When Jesus is in the company how lively they all are! Why, in these warm mornings, some seem half inclined to fall asleep, even in the House of PrayerThe spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak.

But when Jesus is in the company, the spirit triumphs over the flesh and we feel full of life, power and energy in the Divine service! When our hearts burn within us because of His Words, our bodies cannot freeze. When the soul is quickened by His Presence, then the whole man is awakened. As when the sun rises, his light wakes thousands of sleepers, though no voice is heard, so the smiles of Jesus awaken a sleeping Church and stir it to zeal and energy. If Jesus is in the company, how earnest we grow! How zealous for His Glory! How intent to win souls! I am afraid it is because Jesus is not in the company that we allow many sinners to go by us without a warning and we neglect fine opportunities for serving our Lord.

You have heard of holy Mr. Payson, the American Divine, a man who walked with God in his ministry. He was out one day with a brother minister who had to make a call at a ladys house and Payson went in with him. The lady pressed them both to stay to tea. She was not a Christian woman and Payson had other business and, therefore, he declined. But as she pressed him very earnestly, he sat down and invoked the Divine blessing which he did in terms so sweet and full of holy unction that he impressed everybody. The lady waited upon him with great attention and when he rose up to go, he said to her, Madam, I thank you much for your great kindness to me, but how do you treat my Master? A work of Grace was worked in that lady by the questionshe was brought to Jesus and she opened her house for preachingand a revival followed.

Now, if Jesus had not been with Payson, what had become of that woman? I fear that we go in and out among dying men and women and we let them perishyes, we let them be damned without an effort for their salvationand all because we have not obeyed the voice which speaks to us as it did to Abraham, I am God Almighty, walk before Me and be you perfect. We shall never be perfected as the servants of God unless we walk in His conscious Presence. But if we walk before Him and He is with us, then shall we be earnest in the winning of souls. I am sure, dear Friends, that if Jesus is in the company, then we shall be confident and all doubts will vanish. How firmly shall we believe because we are living in fellowship with the Truth! How safely we shall be guarded against temptation, even as the sheep are safe from the wolf when the shepherd is near!

What blessed, heavenly lives shall we lead! Surely it will be a small change for us to rise from earth to Heaven if Jesus is always in the company, in the family, in the business, in our labors, recreations, in our joys and sorrows!

V. Lastly, I want to dwell, for just a minute, by way of touching the conscience, upon the reflection that JESUS HAS BEEN IN THE COMPANYwhether we have seen Him or not. I want you to look back upon what He has seen in your company supposing Him to have been there, when you were disputing the other night. Yes, a point of doctrine had come up and you differed over it. Did you not wax very warm, my Brother, even so as to grow red in the face? Did you not go away from that friend with whom you disputed almost hating him? You know you did! Supposing Jesus to have been in the company? He was there and He was grieved at the way in which you remembered His doctrine but forgot His spirit! Had you perceived His Presence, you would have put your argument much more sweetly, and you would have spoken, not for the sake of beating your friend in argument, but for the sake of instructing him and glorifying your Lord.

You know that you did not yield a point you ought to have yielded. You knew you were wrong at the time, but your friend pushed you hard and you said to yourself, I will not give way though I see that he is right. Although I suppose that we shall differ about many points till the Lord comes, yet when differences arise, they will present fair opportunities for holy charity and mutual edification and these will gladly be seized if Jesus is in the company. When next we argue, let each one say, Jesus is in this company and, therefore, while we speak up for what we believe to be true, let us do it in a loving spirit. Our arguments will not lose force by being steeped in love. Truth is never stronger than when it walks with charity.

Then, again, it may be that some little time ago certain of you were acting in such a way that no common observer could have seen any difference between you and worldlings. You were out in business, dealing with one who was trying to do his best for himself, and you were trying to do your best for yourselves. Do I blame you? Not for being prudent and circumspectbut I hope you will blame yourselves for going far beyond this. You did nothing which I may style dishonestbut did you not sail dreadfully near the wind? You stated something which I must not call a lie, but still, it was not true as you meant it to be understood, was it? Businessmen too often aim at getting undue advantage of each otherit is diamond cuts diamond, and rather worse at times. If Christian men, in all their dealings, would suppose Jesus to be in the company, how it would change their manners!

Think of Jesus on this side of the counter along with you who sell, and on that side of the counter along with you who buy. You both need His Presence, for the buyer is generally quite as intent upon cheating as the seller! He wants the goods for less than they are worth and the seller, therefore, baits the hook for him. They are both deceivers but the blame is not all on one. When persons must have goods far below the price for which they can be produced, they must not marvel if they find that they are sold an inferior article which looks well enough but turns out to be worthless. Oh, that you Christian people would always suppose Jesus to be in your company! I can hardly imagine Judas cheating John with Jesus looking onnor Philip trading hardly with the lad who had the barley loaves!

Should not our dealings among the sons of men be such as Jesus can approve? He is our Master and Lordlet us imitate Him and do nothing that we would be ashamed for Him to look upon. Do not accuse me of being personal this morning, for if you do, I will plead guilty! If the cap fits, you wear it! The other day you were in company and certain persons were talking profanely, or was it skepticism which they vented? And you, as Christs disciple, heard them and what did you do? Did you bear witness for the Truth of God? They made a jokeit was not very clean, but you laughed! Did you not? And, alas, you said nothing for your Lord! Yet He was in the company, seeing all! You had several opportunities, but you did not put in a word for Truth and holiness!

Now, supposing Jesus to have been in the company? I think He must have been sorely grieved. Surely your Lord must have thought, What? All this said against Me and never a word in reply from him whom I redeemed with My own blood! Was not this Peter, all over again, in his denials of his Lord? You did not deny Him with oaths and curses, but the same cowardly spirit ruled you! Oh, if you had but come out in your true colors! You do not know what an influence you might have had for good! If we set the Lord Jesus Christ always before us, should we not be brave to testify and quick to defend? Think, again, of those evenings when a few friends meet togetherare they not often a waste of time? Supposing Him to have been in the company, as He really is, do you think the evenings should be spent as they frequently are?

Dr. Chalmers, a truly devout man, tells us that once, at a noblemans house, he spent an evening with various friends and talked over the question of the cause and cure of pauperisma subject most suitable for conversation. An aged Highland chieftain among the company listened with great attention to the doctor, for Chalmers was master of the subject. Surely they had not spent the evening amiss. But in the night an unusual noise and a heavy groan were heard. The chieftain was dying. In a few minutes he was dead and Dr. Chalmers stood over him, the picture of distress. Alas, he cried, had I known that my friend was within a few minutes of eternity, I would have preached to him and to you Christ Jesus and Him crucified.

With how much more reason may many Christians repent of their conversation! How bitterly may they look back upon wasted hours! Supposing Jesus to have been in the company, how often must He have been grieved by our frivolities! Do you not think that it is greatly to our discredit as Christian people that we should so often meet and so seldom pray? The happiest evenings that Christians spend are when they talk, even upon secular subjects, in a gracious manner, and do not fail to rise to holier themesand mingle prayer and thanksgiving with their talk! Then when they retire, they feel that they have spent the evening as Jesus would approve. Did I not hear, the other day, of some Christian friend who was going to give up working for Christ? And of a dozen Christian friends who were going to break up and no more go on with their holy service for Jesus?

One was going to leave the Sunday school in which he had been for years! Another was going to allow a weak Church to break up and go to pieces, for he had grown tired of working under discouragements. Another said, I have had my turn, let somebody else do the work. Supposing Jesus to have been in the company, do you think that such observations pleased Him? If Jesus were perceived among us, would any of us turn his back in the day of battle? No, Brothers and Sisters, since Jesus is with us, let us serve Him as long as we have any being! Remember John Newtons speech when they told him that he was too old to preachthe venerable man exclaimed What? Should the old African blasphemer cease to preach while there is breath in his body? Never!

Do not suffer any difficulty, or infirmity to prevent your persevering in the service of Jesus in some form or other. And when you feel as if you must leave the ranks, suppose Him to be in the companyand march on! Forward, Brethren! Jesus heads the way! Forward, for His Presence is victory! God bless you, dear Friends, and all this day may Jesus be in the company to make it a hallowed Sabbath to your souls. Amen.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2611 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A LOST CHRIST FOUND   
NO. 2611

A SERMON   
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A THURSDAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1857.

**But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a days journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances. And when they found Him not, they turned back, again, to Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass that after three days they found Him in the Temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. Luke 2:44-46.**

WHAT a precious treasure must the child Jesus have been to His parents! You who have children whom you love, not merely because they are yours, but because you discover in them traits of character which are signs of Divine Grace, can tell, in some measure, how precious the Child Jesus must have been. Born to His mother in a miraculous manner, her heart was set upon Him and, after all the wonderful things that had been said about Him by the angel, by Simeon and by Anna, you cannot wonder that she expected much, although she really expected less than she received. When you think of the perils and troubles to which His parents were exposed for His sake, by the sword of Herod, the flight into Egypt and the cruelty of Archelaus, you cannot wonder that He was a very choice treasure to them, carefully tended and well guarded and protected. They had felt how terrible it would be to lose Him. They knew His worthat least they guessed something of that inestimable value which must always be attached to the perfect Manhood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you not marvel, therefore, that they could have lost Him? It seems not a little amazing that they could have allowed Him to go away from them even for a minute! Trustworthy as He was, yet He must have been a Child so dear to their hearts, His company must have been so precious to them that one would have thought His mother could scarcely have spared Him from her side for a single moment. You would hardly have imagined that in the midst of such a crowd as was assembled at Jerusalem she would have left Him alone for an instant. Surely, you would say, she would tend that precious treasure perpetually. If she took her Child to places where she might lose Him, she would, with the utmost care, watch over Him until she brought Him back. And yet Mary lost her Son lost Him in Jerusalemand even went a days journey before she discovered her loss!

Do not be astonished, O Believer, do not be amazed at Mary losing her Son! You have a treasure quite as precious, for it is the same blessed Person! Jesus Christ is yoursnot your Son, but your Brothernot your child, but your Friend. No, moreyour Savior! Yours spiritually, yours by precious experience, yours by gracious donation of Himself to you and yours by happy communing which He has held with you in many seasons of sweet refreshment. Yet some of you have lost Himlost His companybut He has not lost you! His loving heart is still immutably the same towards you. You who have lost Him, as you think of your former joys, can join with deep emphasis in Cowpers lines

*Where is the blessedness I knew   
When first I saw the Lord?   
Where is the soul-refreshing view   
Of Jesus and His Word?   
What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!   
How sweet their memory still!   
But now I find an aching void   
The world can never fill.*

How is it you have lost Christ? One would have thought you would never have parted from Him. In such a wicked world as this, with Satan ever ready to rob you of Him, with ten thousand enemies trying to take Him away from youwith such a precious Savior whose Presence is so sweet, whose words are so melodious and whose company is so dear to youone might have thought you would have watched Him every moment and never allowed Him to stray from you. But, alas, you have let Him go! Your Jesus has left you and you are seeking Him, and crying, Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! And, possibly, you went many a days journey before you discovered that you had lost Him. You thought He was still in your soul, when really He had gone from you and left you for a season, to let you find out your great need of Him that you might seek Him, again, with full purpose of heart.

To you, therefore, I address myself, for I think there is something in this narrative especially suitable for you. There is, first, the loss of Christ. Secondly, the seeking after Christ. And, thirdly, the finding of Christ.

I. First, I have something to say concerning THE LOSS OF CHRIST. And I begin by saying that souls, very dear and precious to the Redeemer, may yet lose the sensible enjoyment of His Presence. His mother lost Him, His father lost Him. They were very dear to Him and He was very dear to them, yet they lost Him. Many of the Lords beloved people have lost their Savior. Not lost Him whollythat can never betheir substance is in them, even when they have lost their leaves. The holy Seed within them is the substance of their piety, but they have lost His visible Presence and yet they are dear to Him, as when, by faith, with Simeon, they took Him in their arms and kissed Him with the lips of ardent affection. The best of saints sometimes have to endure the hiding of Gods Countenance and are made to walk through dark paths where they see not the shining of the sun. Shall I pause to give you instances? I might find you many such in Gods Word, but instead, thereof, let me find them in your own hearts. Who among us, that has long known the Lord, has not had, sometimes, to mourn the absence of our Savior? Like the dove that has lost its mate, inconsolable until it has returned, we have been sitting alone and pouring out our moans and groans. We have sung, in plaintive tones   
*Return, O holy Dove, return   
Sweet messenger of rest!   
I hate the sins that made You mourn,   
And drove You from my breast.*   
We have cried to Him to come back, but He has hidden His face from us, and covered Himself in the thick darkness, nor would He manifest Himself to us.   
The first time that this great trouble surprises a true Christian, he usually draws this conclusion from itI am not the Lords child, or else I would always have the smile of His love. It is a wrong conclusion! It is the logic of unbelief, it is a false logic, its conclusion is, therefore, untrue! A child does not always have its fathers smile, though it is a fondly loved one, and is greatly delighted init is the offspring of its fathers heart, very dear to him, sprung from his inmost soul as well as from his loins, yet it does not always have a smile, nor always a sweet word from him. There must be, sometimes, even in Christian families, sharp words from a wise parents loving lips. It is not, therefore, a fair inference that Christ has left the soul on which He is not smiling. Oh, conclude not, you distressed one, you who have lost the evidence of Grace and the comforting Presence of your Master! Conclude not that He has shut up His heart of compassion when He has seemed to close His eyes of love. I sleep, but My heart wakes, He says. I shut My eyes upon you, but My heart is still loving you. I lift the rod and scourge you, but my heart, in its inmost recesses, has still your name inscribed upon it. I will not leave you, I will not forsake you, I have not cast you away. I have chastened you sorely, but I have not given you over unto death. The clouds have not quenched the sun, you shall yet see the light. I will yet shine upon you and once more will I manifest Myself to you. The losing of the conscious realization of Christs Presence, the suspension of communion with Him is a very disagreeable and a very sad part of Christian experience, but let this be notedit is often the experience of a true Christian and some of the very best and most highly favored of Gods children have had to suffer it.   
Now please notice where the parents of Jesus lost Him. They lost Him at the feast at Jerusalem and if ever you lose the company of your Master, O Christian, you will most likely lose it at a feast! I never lost my Masters company at a funeralsuch a thing is more than possible at a wedding. I have never lost my Saviors Presence in the house of mourning, by the bedside of the sick and dyingbut I have sometimes felt suspension of fellowship with my Lord when the flute and the viol have been sounding in my ear and when joy and gladness ruled the hour. Our most happy moments are our most perilous ones! It is said that where the most beautiful cacti growthe most glorious of flowersthere are to be found the most venomous of snakes and, truly, among our delights are to be found our dangers. As Cleopatra had an asp introduced to her in a basket of flowers, so have we many an asp brought to us in our joys. Take heed in the time of your joys, Believeryou are safer in your season of sorrow!   
Storms afford the safest sailing for a Christian, calms are, for him, more terrible than whirlwinds. Deep waters know no rocks, shallow waters that gaily ripple are the perils of the sea of our life. Far out upon the ocean, where the horizon has its round ring and nothing is within sight, the ship is seldom in danger, but near the shore, when the white cliff gladdens the eyes of the marinerthere the pilot must look well to his helm! In your troubles, God is often especially with you, but He is not always with you in your joys. Jobs sons learned that there were dangers in feastsGods sons may not learn the same lesson in so terrible a mannerbut they may learn it in a very grievous way. It would have been better for David to have been sick on his bed than to have been walking on his housetop enjoying the evening breeze. And it would be better for you to be cast into the fiery furnace of affliction, where you can be refined, than to be left to lie down in the meads of happiness, where you may have poison poured into your ear by a wily adversary. Beware of your joys! There is more fear of losing Christ at a feast than anywhere else. You are a young Christian and you are going out to a party this weekmind what you do! I will not say to youDo not go. If you can ask Gods blessing in going, go. But I do say to youTake care, take care! Mind you, be careful! Reef your sails when you get there. Go as fast as you like when you are alone, but mind what you are doing when you are in the society of others. Take care, take care, take care, especially in mixed company!   
And, ah, I am sorry to have to sayTake care, too, when you are in professedly Christian company, for what fine Christian company there is to be seen, sometimes. Christians that cannot find amusement enough for themselves, cannot talk about the Lord Jesus, cannot mention His name, cannot find pleasure enough in the things of Scripture, but must turn to other and meaner things to supply them with joy. Take heed of all doubtful companythere is little good to be gained in some of your gatherings. If you cannot spend your time in prayer and in seeking what Jesus said and did, you had better be at home. Christ is often lost at a feastHis Presence is often withdrawn from us when we get into company. Our Jesus loves seclusionHe will not strive, nor lift up His voice, nor cause it to be heard in the streets! He loves to dwell with His people in the privacy of the house. His message is, Come, My people, enter into your chambers, and shut your door after you. You will not lose your Master there. Have Him with you in your own householdyou will not lose Him there! Walk with Him, alone, and you will not lose Him. I do not sayHave no feasts   
*Why should the children of a King   
Go mourning all their days?*

I will not sayHave no hours of gladnessyou have a right to them. I will not sayDo not meet togetherdo so, your meeting may be profitable to each of you. But I do sayTake care what you do. Christ Jesus was lost at a feast by His mother and He may be lost by you unless you are very careful.

To young persons who are seriously inclined, yet not decided for God, let me solemnly say that evil company is a snare of the devil. Oh, how many have been ruined by it! If Satan can but get you back to your old companions, he thinks it will be all right for him and that he will be sure to have you at last. Nothing will do for a man who has kept evil company but to leave it altogether. You cannot bear much of ityou had better give it up, altogetherthen you will be entirely safe. Or else there will be first, one, and then another enticing you a little way back, and then a little further back until who can tell?All those fair beginnings, as you thought them to be, may end by being blighted and destroyed by the blast of carnal, frothy conversation! The Lord deliver us from losing Jesus at a feast!

Observe, also, that Mary and Joseph lost Jesus for three days, from which I learn that it is possible for a Believer to lose the company of his Master for a long time, and yet find Him, again, after all. They did find Him after the three days and you, too, poor mourning Believer, will find your Savior again! There is a poor doubter yonder. He is sick at heart, for he has lost his Lord and he cannot find Him. Oh, how he has groaned and poured out his heart before God, but still no answer has come to his cry. He concludes, therefore, that he must perish! No, poor desponding one, the parents of Jesus found Him the third day, so seek Him once more! His absence is but temporary. It may be long, but the longest hiding of His face shall have an end. O poor, timid child, cry not at the eclipsethough it may last an hour, the suns light is not quenched! O you poor Little-Faith, you may well sigh, but do not despair! If Jesus has left you for a while, He will yet return to you, you shall again behold His face, again bask in the sunshine of His love and know that He is yours and that you are His. If you have lost Him for monthsyes, even for years, I had almost saidyet shall you find Him again! With your whole heart seek Him and He will be found of youonly give yourself up thoroughly to the search for Him and verily He will not entirely leave you, but you shall yet discover Him to your joy and gladness, and shall again be feasted with marrow and fatness. Three days was the Child Jesus lost, but yet He was found again by Joseph and Mary! So Christ may be for a long time, absent, and yet may the poor saint find comfort in Him once more.

II. Now I come to notice THE SEEKING AFTER CHRIST. The father and mother of Jesus sought Him and those who have lost Christs Presence will do well to imitate their example.

Note, first, that they sought Him very judiciously, by which I mean that they sought Him in the right places. They went back to Jerusalem and sought Him. It was at Jerusalem they lost Him, so it was at Jerusalem that they might naturally expect to find Him. Tell me where you lost the company of Christ and I will tell you the most likely place for you to find Him again. Did you lose the company of Christ by forgetting prayers and becoming slack in your devotions? Have you lost Christ in the prayer closet? Then you will find Him there! Did you lose Christ through some sin? Then you will find Him in no other way but by the giving up of the sin and seeking, by the Holy Spirit, to mortify the member in which the lust dwells. Did you lose Christ by neglecting the Scriptures? Then you must find Christ in the Scriptures where you lost Himyou will find Him. It is a true saying, Look for a thing where you dropped it, it is there. So look for Christ where you lost Him, for He has not gone away. It is hard work to go back for ChristJohn Bunyan tells us that the pilgrim found the piece of the road back to the arbor of easethat journey back that he had to travel to find his roll under the settlethe hardest piece he had to go. Twenty miles on the road is easier to go than one mile back for the lost evidence. Take care, then, when you find your Master, to cling more closely to Him! But if you have lost Him, go back and seek Him where you lost Him.

And note, too, that they sought Him among His kinsfolk and acquaintances. And that is the right place for us, also, to find Him. If I am in distress of soul, where can I get relief? I saw a huge placard as I came along, just now, recommending persons who have the heartache to go to Charles Matthews to get it curedI suppose, by seeing a play. Ah, they will go a long while, if it is real heartache, before they will get it taken away there. The theater is the place where they get the heartache, not where they lose it! People dont lose diseases, generally, where they catch them. If you catch a fever anywhere, I would not advise you to go to the same house to get rid of it. If you have the heartache through indulging in some sin, it is not by deeper draughts of sin that you can cure it! Drinking may stupefy and intoxicate you for a while, and make you forget it, but it is a bad thing to use intoxicating liquor instead of the real remedy. O you that have the heartache, you that have broken hearts, you that have troubles rolling over your headswhere can you expect to find Christ? Why, among His kinsfolk and acquaintances! Do not go to the giddy haunts of vice and singo not where there is revelry and mirth, but go where the disciples of Jesus are known to meet! Talk with His people, converse with those who have the most knowledge of His love and of His power to save. It is most likely that you will find your Savior among His kinsfolk and acquaintancego not to the world to look for Him! Seek pearls where they lie deep down in the sea, but seek them not where such treasures never were discovered. Otherwise, you will go on a fools errand in verity and truth.

Mark, again, that while they sought Jesus judiciously, they sought Him continuously. They did not look for Him just one day and then give up the searchbut they kept on looking until they found Him. So, Christian, if you have lost the precious joy of communion with your Lord, keep on seeking it and do not stop your prayers until you have recovered it. Be not content with one dive into the depths after this pearl, but dive again and again, with untiring perseverance, until you discover it. And yet, again, we are told that they sought Him sorrowfully. Mary said to Jesus, Your father and I have sought You sorrowing. I know thisno true Believer will ever lose the company of His Lord without sorrowing over his lossit would be impossible! I have heard some of you say that you have not had fellowship with Christ lately, but if you make that confession with a smile on your face, I have grave doubts about your piety. True Christians think it their greatest grief to lose their Masters Presence they do not talk of it lightlyit is their misery that they have not the Prince of Mercy with them! They perpetually need His company and if it is withdrawn, even for an instant, they feel that the light of the sun is taken away from their eyes

*Tis Heaven to dwell in His embrace,   
And nowhere else but there.*

The parents of Jesus sought Him sorrowfully and we must do the same if we have lost Him. The best messengers to find Christ are the penitent tears of His saints. Tears act on Divine mercy like the magnet on the needlethe tears of the Christian find the heart of God. Go after your Master with wet eyes and He will soon come to you. There is a sacred connection between Christ and weeping eyes, for it is Christs office to wipe the mourners eyes. And whenever He sees you weeping, His fingers are eager to be wiping them. He must wipe them. He cannot bear to see the tears and, if He wipes them, He must come to you. So, the surest way to find Him is to seek Him sorrowing. There is nothing like a sorrowing prayer if we have lost our Lord. Prayers from a heart that is wrung with the rough hand of sorrow are the most acceptable in the ears of the God of Sabaoth. If you are sorrowing, O Christian, then seek on and believe that you are all the nearer to finding your Lord when your sorrows increase! Tears are the bilge-water of the soulthe eyes are the pumps and thus God keeps you floating till He brings you, again, into the haven of rest and peace! It is a blessed thing to be able to seek Christ, though it is sorrowfully.

III. Now I close by speaking concerning THE FINDING OF CHRIST. Mark, first, where the lost Christ was found. Do you know where His parents went to seek Him? When they went to Jerusalem, they asked all their kinsfolk and acquaintances, Have you seen that dear lovely Child? All knew Him, but they answered, No, we have not seen Him. I suppose they then went to the house of entertainment, the inn where they had stayed, and asked, Is our Son here? Is our Child herethat fair-haired Boy, the most beautiful you ever saw? Ah, the people would reply, that is an old tale with women. Go away! We have not seen Him. He is not here. Christ was not in the inn. There was not room for Him there when He was born and there was not likely to be room for Him to remain there afterwards. They did not go to the palace to seek Himnot inside it, at any rate. They were afraid of Herod, for if Herod had laid hold of Him, there would have been an end of Him. I daresay they thought that the dear Child had been attracted by the splendid buildings that decked Jerusalem with glory, and that He would be sure to be in the crowd, gazing at some of the great and grand structures, so they went through the principal streets, thinking, surely, He would be there. And when they asked the curious people from foreign countries who were investigating all the wonders of the city, if they had seen the Child, they most likely stared them in the face, for Christ Jesus is not always to be found with the curious in their research. There was a mountebank in the street and a number of children had gathered around him and the performance might be likely to attract Jesus, so His parents went there, but folly knew nothing about the holy Child Jesus.

At last, His mother thought that, possibly, He might be in the Temple. Yes, that was the place for Him! He was the King of the Temple, and a king should be in his palaceand there they found Him, humbling the pride of the doctors! So learn from this, O Christian, that you will never find your Master where folly exhibits herself to gazing multitudes. You will never find Him where curious learning studies with deep research to discover everything that is wonderful and profound. You will never find Him where giddy mirth is gathered in the assemblies of the ungodly. But if you would find Christ, you must find Him in His Temple, in the house of prayer! It is here that He makes His glories known! It is here that He speaks to His children. Here are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David

*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.*

Sinner, if you seek Christ, seek Him where He is to be found! If you seek happiness, peace and mercy, go after Him where He goes. Lie down at the pool of Bethesda and if God has not yet quickened you, oh, that you might be brought to the pool of Siloam, to the gate of Divine Mercy, for it is here that Jesus Christ loves to resort and work the great wonders of His Grace! To the saints, I wish to say just thisDo not rest if you have lost the society of your Lord. Do not give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids until you have had restored to you the communion that has been suspended. Do not live, oh, I beseech you, do not live live, did I say?it is not livingdo not continue to merely exist in such a condition for another hour! If your fellowship with Christ is broken, run to your house, fall upon your knees and cry to Him to give you fresh manifestations of His love. It is dangerous to delay! O child of God, it is perilous to be without your Lord! This would be to make you like sheep without its shepherd, a tree without water at its roots, a sere leaf in the tempest, not bound to the Tree of Life. Oh, may Christ influence your heart, that you may first see your danger and then, with full purpose of heart, seek after Him who is waiting to be found of you! I beseech you, by your desire for usefulness and happiness. I beseech you, by the loveliness of Christ, by the fearful condition of being found out of fellowship with Him. I beseech you, by your own sorrow, which you have already suffered, and by the misery which will certainly increase unless you find Him! I beseech you rest not until you have found Christ, again, to the joy and gladness of your spirit!

And as for those of you who know not the Savior, what I have been saying is as nothing to youyou are careless about these all-important mattersbut I beseech you, by Him that lives and was dead, by the solemnities of Hell, by the dread mysteries of eternity, by the bliss of Heaven and by the terrors of the Day of JudgmentI beseech you as a dying man speaking to dying men, if you have never found Christ, let these words ring in your earsyou are without God, without Christ, without hope and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel! Let me say those words again, though they are like the tolling of a knellWithout God, without Christ, without hope and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel! Ponder over those two words, Without Christ! Without Christ! And if they do not stagger you, God help you! But if, my Hearer, they do cause you to start. If God shall make them break you up, then, Sinner, when He has broken you in pieces, remember that Christ Jesus is willing to save all those whom He has made willing to be saved! As certainly as you need Him, He wants you! Seek Him and you will find Him! Do but knock and the door of mercy shall be opened! Do but ask and you shall receive!

O awakened Sinner, here is Christs message to you! He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. Oh, that you would believe in Christ and be baptized! Oh, that God would help all of you who have nothing of your own, to give yourselves up to Christ and take Him to be your All-in-All! But, hardened Sinner, I send you away with those dreadful words which I repeated, just now, and I hope they will ring in your ears all the week when you walk the streets, when you are on your bed, when you are at your mealswithout God, without Christ, without hope and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. And, therefore, without Heaven! Those who have the earnest of Heaven even now have a blessed hope which makes not ashamed. May that hope be given to you, my Hearers, for Christs sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **ISAIAH 57:10-21; 58:1-11.**

The Prophet has been giving a very terrible description of the sin of the nation. We need not read it all, but at last he says this   
Verse 10. You are wearied in the greatness of your way. You are worn out with your own way. You have been so zealous in your rebellion against God that you have actually fatigued yourself in the pursuit of evil. That is a true description of those who have worn themselves out in the ways of sin.   
10. Yet said you not, There is no hope: you have found the life of your hand; therefore you were not grieved. Though they had hunted for pleasure and had not found it, and had brought themselves into great distress, yet they would not give up the hope of, after all, succeeding in their rebellion. Oh, how obstinately are men set upon seeking satisfaction where it can never be foundnamely, in the pursuit of sin! These people were still alive and they were content to be so, but they were not grieved although God had sorely chastened them.   
11. And of whom have you been afraid or feared, that you have lied and have not remembered Me? Me, your Maker, your Friend, to whom you owe your very soul, unless that soul shall go down into the Pit, You have not remembered Me.   
11. Nor laid it to your heart; have not I held My peace even of old, and you do not fear Me? When God is very long-suffering and lets men alone in their sin, then, often, they quite forget Him and have no fear of Him.

12. I will declare your righteousness, and your works; for they shall not profit you. If God once takes the self-righteous mans righteousness and explains what it really is, He will soon reveal to its owner that it is a mere delusion and sham that will not profit him at all.

13. When you cry, let your companies deliver you. When sickness, depression of spirit and death, itself, shall come to you, and you begin to dread what is to follow, and cry to those who comforted you in your time of health, what will they be able to do for you?

13. But the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that puts his trust in Me shall possess the land, and shall inherit My holy mountain. All confidence in men shall be blown away as chaff is driven by the windbut faith in God wins the day.

14, 15. And shall say, Cast you up, cast you up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of My people. 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. That is a wonderful verse! You notice that the prelude to it explains the greatness and the holiness of God and then, like an eagle swooping out of the sky even down to the earth, we find God coming from His high and lofty place to dwell with humble and contrite hearts! Not with the proudnot with you who think yourselves good and excellentdoes God dwell, but with men who feel their sin and acknowledge it. With men who feel their unworthiness and confess it. I will read this verse again to impress it upon your memory. 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.

16. For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always angry: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. See the tender meaning of Gods message in this verse. He has been encouraging the guilty one and making him feel the enormity of his offenses and then He says, I will not do that any more, lest I should crush him. He is too weak to bear any more punishment or reproof. Therefore I will not any longer afflict him, but I will turn to him in mercy, for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.

17. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry, and smote him: I hid and was angry, and he went on forward in the way of his heart. Here God shows that His chastening does not always produce a good result, for, sometimes, when men are tried on account of sin, they grow worse and worse. I hid and was angry, and he went on forward in the way of his heart. What does God say of such a great sinner as that?

18. I have seen his ways. I have seen that he goes from bad to worse when I afflict him. Now I will try another plan. I have seen his ways,   
18, 19. And will heal him: I will lead him, also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off and to him that is near, says the LORD; and I will heal him. It is heart-melting to see the tenderness of God. I will not further smite him, lest his spirit should fail before me. I will not continue to strike him because I can see that he only goes farther away from Me, the more I chastise him. I will deal with him in abounding love. I will heal him. I believe that there is many a sinner who runs away from God thinking that the Lord is his enemy and, as God pursues him, he does not dare look back. He thinks that it is the step of the Avenger that he hears, so he flees faster and farther away from God. But when he does venture to look back and sees that it is a loving Fathers face that is gazing upon him, oh, how he regrets his folly in running from Him! Then he throws himself into the arms of the God of Love and wonders how he could have been the enemy of this, His greatest Friend. May such a happy turn as that happen to some whom I am now addressing!   
20, 21. But the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked. They may have the semblance of peace, or a false peace, but nothing which is worthy of being called peace.   
Isaiah 58:1, 2. Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me daily. There are many nominally religious people who are full of sin. They have an external religion which allows them to live in rebellion against God. And such people are not easily convinced of sin. Hence the Prophet is bid to lift up his voice like a trumpet. Yet, even if he does so, they will not hear him. There are none so deaf as those that will not hearand these men do not wish to hear what God has to say to them Yet they seek Me daily   
2. And delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. They are always in a place of worship if possible. They cannot have too many services and sermons, yet they have no heart towards God. O my dear Friends, let us always be afraid of merely external religiousness! Genuine conversion, real devotion to God, true communion with Godthese are sure things but mere outward religiousness is nothing but so much varnish and tinsel! It is, indeed, but the ghastly coffin of a soul that never was quickened unto spiritual life. This is the way these sham religionists talked about their religion.   
3. Why have we fasted, they say, and You see not? Why have we afflicted our soul, and You take no notice? When God rejects a mans religion, what must be the reason of it? Here is the explanation.   
3. Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labors. You fast, but you make your workmen toil on! You determine that they shall not have one atom of their labor abated and you make an amusement of what you call a fast. In the day of your fast you find pleasure.   
4. Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fiat of wickedness: you shall not fast as you do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. The best sort of mere external religion will soon turn sour. If you do not worship the Lord in a right spirit, God will loathe the very form of your service! Why, you might, by hypocrisy, make even Prayer Meetings to be hateful in the sight of God! And the ordinances may be made as abominable to God as the mass itself! You can soon degrade hearing sermons into mere listening to oratory and the Sabbath may easily become an object only of superstitious and formal observance. The heartthe heart is everything! If that is wrong, it sours the sweetest things under Heaven.

5. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the LORD? Does God care only for the externals of worship? Is He satisfied with sackcloth and ashes, and the hanging down of the head like a bulrush?   
6. Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that to break every yoke? Yes, this is true fasting before Godnot to demand your pound of flesh and declare that you will have it. Not to grind down the poor man to the last farthing, but, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens and to let the oppressed go free.   
7. Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh? That is the kind of fast that the Lord approvesto deny yourself that you may give to those who are in need!   
8, 9. Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: then your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your reward. Then shall you call and the LORD shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, Here I am. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the pointing of the finger and speaking vanity. That is, if you shall take away all oppression, all wrong-doing to men, all talking of lies and speaking vanity, Then shall your light break forth as the morning.   
10, 11. And if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in obscurity and your darkness be as the new day: and the LORD shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. What promises God gives to those who consider the poor and needy round about them! But if you shut your ears to the cry of the distressed, God will shut His ears to your cry.

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THE FIRST RECORDED WORDS OF JESUS   
NO. 1666

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, JUNE 25, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said unto Him, Son, why have You thus dealt with us? Look, Your father and I have sought You sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that you sought Me? Know you not that I must be about My Fathers business? Luke 2:48, 49.**

THESE words are very interesting because they are the first recorded utterances of our Divine Lord. No doubt He said much that was very admirable while yet a Child, but the Holy Spirit has not seen fit to record anything except these two questions, as if to teach us that childhood should be retiring and modesta stage of preparation rather than of observation. We hear little of a Holy Child, for modesty is a precious part of its character. We ought, therefore, to give all the more earnest heed to these words because they stand at the very forefront of our Lords teaching and are, in some respects, the announcement of His whole life.

Spoken, as they were, at 12 years of age, we may regard them as the last words of His childhood and the first words of His youth. He is just passing away from the time in which He could be called a child into that in which He becomes, in the eastern clime, where men ripen faster than here, a young Man, a son of the Law, fit to sit among the doctors in the temple and to be instructed by them. The early days of youth are very perilous, for then it is that the rest of life is often shaped. Happy, indeed, is he who so early begins with God and chooses as his business the service of the Lord! If all our youth had the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, what evidence we should have that the Spirit of God had been working upon our children and was now about to speak through our youth!

I suppose that these words must have come into Lukes Gospel through Mary, herself. How, otherwise, could the evangelist have known that, they understood not the saying which He spoke unto them, or that Mary, kept all these sayings in her heart? Mary evidently narrates the words of the Holy Child, words which she had pondered again and again. She treasured up for us the gems which dropped from Jesus lips. She tells us that this saying, simple though it seems to be, was not fully understood either by herself or by His reputed father, Joseph. And yet, mark you, we are told, expressly, that Mary, kept all these sayings in her heart.

When you cannot put a Truth of God into your understandings, yet lay it up in your affections. If there is anything in Gods Word which is exceedingly difficult, do not, therefore, reject it, but rather preserve it for future study. In a fathers talk with his child there must be a good deal that the child cannot fully comprehend. If he is a wise child, he will seize upon the very thing he does not understand and treasure it for future use, expecting that light will spring out of it, by-and-by. Be not among those who say that they will limit their faith by their understanding! It is probable that you will have a narrow faith if it is so, or else you will have a wide conceitfor a proud conceit, alone, can make us believe that we are able to understand even one-tenth of what God has revealed!

No, I will go further! Although we may understand enough to be saved by the Truth, yet the full depth of the Truths of God are understood by no man and if, therefore, we make it the rule to limit our faith by our understanding, we shall have an extremely limited range of faith! No, let us treasure up these things! Let us highly prize these diamonds which can only be cut by diamonds! Let us not put them aside because they are difficult, for it may be one index of their genuineness that they are so. We are grateful that the Spirit of God has given us this first word of our Lord Jesus and we love it none the less because it is a deep word.

We are not surprised that even as a Child, the Son of God should give forth mysterious sayings. Do you wonder that there should be much in Scripture which you cannot comprehend, when even the first words of Christ, when He is yet a boy, is not understood? No, not understood by those who had nursed Him, who had lived with Him the whole 12 years and, consequently, knew His mode of speech and the peculiarities of His youthful language! If even Mary and Joseph did not understand, who am I, that I should forever be saying, I must understand this or I will not receive it? No, if we understand it not, yet will we keep all these sayings in our hearts, for we have this advantagethat the Holy Spirit is now given, by whose teaching we understand things which were hidden from the wisest saints of old!

Beloved Friends, how great and full of meaning was this first word which seems so simple! The longer you look into it, the more you will be astonished at its fullness. Only superficiality and ignorance will think it plain! The closest student will be the most astonished with the profundity of its meaning. Stier, to whom I am much indebted for thoughts upon this subject, calls this text, the solitary flower out of the enclosed garden of thirty years. What fragrance it exhales! It is a bud, but how lovely! It is not the utterance of His ripe manhood, but the question of His youthyet this half-opened bud discovers delicious sweets and delightful colors worthy of our admiring meditation.

We might call these questions of Jesus the prophecy of His Character, and the program of His life. In this, our text, He set before His mother all that He came into the world to dorevealing His high and lofty Nature and disclosing His glorious errand! This verse is one of those which Luther would call His little Bibles, with the whole Gospel compressed into it. What if I compare it to the perfume of roses, of which a single drop might suffice to perfume nations and ages? It would not be possible to overrate these beautiful words! Wonderful words! Wonderful words of life! Who, then, am I that I should venture to take such a text? I do not take it with any prospect of being able to unveil all its meaning, but merely to let you see how unfathomable it is. Emmanuel, God With Us, speaks divinely while yet in His youth! The words of THE WORD surpass all others! May the Spirit of God open them to us!

I shall handle the text thusFirst, here is the Holy Childs perception. Secondly, the Holy Childs home. Thirdly, the Holy Childs occupation, and fourthly, the Holy Childs lesson to any of us who may be seeking Him.

I. Here we see THE HOLY CHILDS PERCEPTION. Notice, first, that He evidently perceived most clearly His high relationship. Mary said, Your father and I have sought You sorrowing. The Child Jesus had been known to call Joseph His father, no doubt, and Joseph was His father in the common belief of those round about Him. We read in reference to our Lord even at 30 years of age these wordsBeing, as was supposed, the son of Joseph. The Holy Child does not deny it, but He looks over the head of Joseph and He brings before His mothers mind another Father. Know you not that I must be about My Fathers business?

He does not explain this saying, but it is evident enough that He remembered, then, the wonderful relationship which existed between His Humanity and the great God, for He was not conceived after the ordinary manner, but He had come into the world in such a fashion that it was said to Mary, That Holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God. In a still higher sense and as a Divine Being, He claimed filial relationship with the Most High, but here, no doubt, He speaks as a Man, and as a Man He calls God, My Father, after a higher fashion than we can do because of His mysterious birth.

You notice that all through His life He never calls God, Our Father, although He bids us do so. We are children of the same family and when we pray we are to say, Our Father which are in Heaven, but our Lord Jesus has still a filial relationship more special than ours and, therefore, to God He says on His own account, My Father. He expressly claims this personal relationship for Himself and I am sure we do not grudge Him that relationship, for upon it our own relationship to the Father depends. Because He is the Son of the Highest, therefore we enter into the filial relationship with the Eternal One according to our capacity. Jesus the Child perceived that He was the Son of the Highest and with all the simplicity of childhood He declared the secret to His mother who already knew how true it was

Brothers and Sisters, this Holy Childs perception should be an instruction to us. Do you and I often enough and clearly enough perceive that God is our Father, too? Do we not often act upon the hypothesis that we are not related to Him, or that we are orphans and that our Father in Heaven is dead? Do you not catch yourselves, sometimes, departing from under the influence of the spirit of adoption and getting into the spirit of independenceand of waywardness and sin? This will never do! Let us learn from this Blessed One that as He early perceived His high and eminent relationship to the Father, so ought we, also, even though we may be nothing more than children in Grace. We ought to know and to value beyond all expression our sonship with the great Father who is in Heaven. In truth this Truth of God should override every other and we should live and move and act under the consciousness of our being the children of God. O Holy Spirit, teach us this!

This Holy Child, next, perceived the constraints of this relationship. He says, Know you not that I must be about My Fathers business? Write that, MUST, in capital letters! It is the first appearing of an imperious, must, which swayed the Savior all along. We find it written of Him that, He must go through Samaria, and He Himself said, I must preach the Kingdom of God. And again to Zaccheus, I must abide in your house, and again, I must work the works of Him that sent Me. The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders. The Son of Man must be lifted up. It behooved Christ to suffer. As a Son, He must learn obedience by the things which He suffered. This First-Born among many brethren must feel all the drawings of His Sonshipthe sacred instincts of the holy Nature and, therefore, He must be about His Fathers business.

Now, I put this to you again, for I need to be practical all alongDo you and I feel this Divine, must, as we ought? Is necessity laid upon us, yes, woe laid upon us unless we serve our Divine Father? Do we ever feel a hungering and a thirsting after Him so that we must draw near to Him and must come to His House and approach His feet and must speak with Him and must hear His voice and must behold Him face to face? We are not truly subdued to the Son-Spirit unless it is so. But when our sonship shall have become our master idea, then shall this Divine necessity be felt by us, also, impelling us to seek our Fathers face! As the sparks fly upward to the central fire, so must we draw near unto God, our Father and our All.

This Holy Child also perceived the forgetfulness of Mary and Joseph and He wondered. He sees that His mother and Joseph do not perceive His lofty birth and the necessities arising out of itand He wonders. How is it, He says, in a childlike way, How is it that you sought Me? Know you not that I must be about My Fathers business? He is astonished that they do not recognize His Sonship; that they do not perceive that God is His Father! Does not Mary remember the angels word at the Annunciation? Did she not know how He was born and remember His mysterious relationship to God? Of course she did! But she was a woman and as a woman she had nursed this Child, and she had brought Him up and, therefore, she began to forget the mystery which surrounded Him, in the sweet familiarities with which she had been indulged! And so she has to be reminded of it by her Childs wonder that she should have forgotten that He was the Son of the Highest.

Have you those perceptions, dear children of God? Do you not often wonder why men do not know that you are a child of God? Have you sometimes spoken and they have smiled at you as if you were idiotic or fanatical, and you have thought to yourself, What? Do they not know how a child of God should speak and how a child of God should act? Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.

*Tis no surprising thing,   
That we should be unknown!   
The Jewish world knew not their King,   
Gods everlasting Son.*

The spiritual man is not understood, He is a wonder unto many. Marvel not, my Brothers and Sisters, if carnal men do not understand you. Yes, even your own Brothers and Sisters in Christthose who love your Fatherhave, sometimes, been astonished at you when you have only been acting simply out of your own renewed heart.

Many Christians get so stilted that they are not like children at home. They act more like strangers or hired servants in the Fathers house who have bread enough and to spare, but yet never can talk as the children do. Few let their hearts flow out with that holy fearlessness, that sweet familiarity which becomes a child of God. Why, if you and I went about the world under the full possession of this idea, Beloved, now are we the sons of God, I have no doubt we would act in such a way that the mass of professors would be amazed at us and we should be still more amazed at their amazement and astonished at their astonishment! If we only acted as our innermost nature would dictate to us, what manner of persons we would be!

So this Holy Child perceived His glorious Sonship, perceived the constraints of the Sonship working within Him and perceived that His parents did not comprehend His feelings. The Child Jesus began, also, to perceive that He, personally, had a work to do and so He said, Know you not that I must be about My Fathers business? He had been 12 years silent, but now the shadow of the Cross began to fall upon Him and He felt a little of the burden of His lifework. He perceives that He has not come here merely to work in a carpenters shop, or to be a peasant child at Nazareth. He has come here to vindicate the honor of God, to redeem His people, to save them from their sins and to lead an army of blood-washed ones up to the Throne of the great Father above and, therefore, He declares that He has a higher occupation than Mary and Joseph can understand.

Yet He must go back to the home at Nazareth and, for 18 years He must do His Fathers business by, as far as we read, doing nothing in the way of public ministry! He must do His Fathers business by hearing the Father, in secret, so that when He comes out, He may say to His disciples, All things which I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you. So great a lesson had He to teach that He must spend another 18 years in learning it fully and God must open His ears and awaken Him morning by morning to hear as an instructed one, that afterwards He may come forth the Teacher of Israel, the Lord and Master of Apostles and evangelists!

Beloved, I come back to the practical point again. Have you, with your sonship, obtained a vivid perception of your call and your work? You have not redemption set before you to accomplish, but you have to make known that redemption far and wide! As God has given to Christ power over all flesh that He may give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him, so has Jesus given you power over such-and-such fleshand there are some in this world who never will receive eternal life except through you! It is appointed that from your lips they shall hear the Gospel! It is ordained in the Divine decree that through your instrumentality they shall be brought into the Kingdom of God! It is time that you and I, who perhaps have reached 30, 40, 50 or 60 years, should now bestir ourselves and say, Know you not that I must be up and doing my Fathers business?

David had to wait till he heard the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry treesdo you not hear the sound of a going now? Are there not signs and indications that you must work the will of Him that sent you and must finish His work? The night comes wherein no man can work. Up, then, you children of God, and, following the Holy Child Jesus, begin to ask this questionKnow you not that I must be about my Fathers business? These were the perceptions of this Holy Child. Oh that they may come strong upon us in our own smaller way! May we perceive that we are born of God! May we perceive the Spirit within us whereby we cry, Abba, Father! May we have a wonderment that others do not understand the calls and urgencies of our condition and may we have such a sense of our high calling as to proceed at once to fulfill it as God, the Holy Spirit, shall help us!

II. We shall now think of THE HOLY CHILDS HOME. Here I am obliged to amend our version and I am certain that the correction is, itself, correct. I am all the more strengthened in this opinion because the Revised Version endorses the ALTERATION. This is how they read itKnow you not that I must be in My Fathers house? That may not be verbally exact, but it is the true sense. It should run thus, Know you not that I must be in My Fathers? There is no word for house, But in almost all languages, house, is understood. You know how we commonly say to one another, I am going down to my fathers, or, I shall spend the evening at my brothers. Everybody knows that we mean house, and that is just how the Greek, here, runs. Know you not that I must be in My Fathers? It means, house.

That must be the first and primary meaning of it. The text says nothing of business, unless we understand it to be included as a matter of course, since we may be sure that Jesus would not be idle in His Fathers, for He said, My Father works and I work. Observe that the question of Mary was, Why have You thus dealt with us? Behold Your father and I have sought You sorrowing. The answer is, Know you not that I must be in My Fathers house? That is plainly a complete answer and therein strikes you as more natural than a reference to business. If Jesus had only said, Know you not that I must be about My Fathers business? it would not have been any guide to them as to where He would be, because all His life He

was about His Fathers business.

But He was not always in the Temple. He was about His Fathers business when He sat by the well and talked to the woman of Samaria. And He was about His Fathers business when He trod the waves of the sea of Galilee. He might be anywhere and yet be about His Fathers business but the natural answer to the question was, How is it that you sought Me? Know you not that I must be in My Fathers house? Let us read the passage thus, and see the childs home. Where should Jesus be but in His Fathers dwelling place? I doubt not that with desire He had desired to eat that Passover when He should get to be 12 years old and be old enough to go up to His Fathers house! He looked upon the Temple as being, for the time, the residence of God where He manifested Himself in an unusual degreeand so this Holy Child looked upon those walls and courts with delight as His Fathers house.

It seemed most natural to Him that when He reached the place He should stay there. He had never really been at home before. Nazareth was the place where He was brought up, but Jerusalems Temple was on earth His true home. I picture to my mind how that blessed Child loved the place where His Father was worshipped! He would stand and gaze on the lambs and the bullocks that were slain in sacrifice, understanding much more about them, though a Child, than you or I do, though we are grown up. It must have been all wonderland to Him as a ChildI speak not of Him as Godit must have been all marvelous to Him and deeply interesting. When the Psalms went up, how He sang them with His sweet youthful voice! He said within Himself, I must sing praises unto My Father. When the solemn prayers were uttered and He heard them, there were none so devout as He as He heard the people worship His Father in Heaven!

It is touching to think of Him, in His Fathers palaceHe was greater than the Temple and yet a youth! It was His Fathers house in a special sense because in the Temple did everything speak of Gods Glory and everything there was meant for Gods worship. It was His Fathers house, too, in the sense that there His Fathers work went on. If it had not been for the sin which had turned aside the Rabbis and the priests from the faithful following of God, the Temple was the place out of which Gods power went forth. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined. There, too, His Fathers Truth was proclaimed and His ordinances were celebrated. The Temple was the center of the great Husbandmans farmit was the homestead from which all the workers went forth to till the fields of Christs own Father!

It was there, especially, to Him that His Fathers name was taught. He speedily made His way away from the place of sacrifice to that of teachingsacrifice and offering You did not desirebut away He went to the doctors. This thoughtful, spiritual Child wanted to know about everything sacred and so He took His place among the learnersand the teachers were astonished when this new, Child of the Law, put to them questions which showed that He must have thought vastly more than any other person in the Temple! When these enquiries were answered, they were but the predecessors of a whole army of other questions, for He wanted to know more! They were amazed that such enquiries should come from a youthful mind. In return they put questions to the youth and He answered well, for He had a remarkable mind and His mother had taught Him the precious Word of God so that He had the Law and the Prophets at His fingertips. No doubt He quoted, in His answers, the sayings of Isaiah or of Jeremiah and utterly astounded the doctors as they perceived that He saw deep into the Holy Words.

Now, to be practical again, dear Friends, where should be our home as Gods children but in our Fathers house? Do you think we have enough of the child spirit about us to feel this? Know you not that I must be in my Fathers house? That house is His Church. Among the faithful He dwells. The saints of God are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. Let me be often among His people, for I must be in my Fathers house! Ought I not, must I not, shall I not, if I am, indeed, a child of God, love to be where God is worshipped? Will not the hymns of Gods house charm me? Will not the prayers of Gods people delight me? Shall I not be eager to be at the Prayer Meetings of the saints? Shall I not rejoice to join in their praise? Will not my soul be delighted to be at the Table of communion and everywhere else where God has appointed to be worshipped by His saints?

Shall I not love every place where Gods work is going on? If I hear the Gospel preached, shall I not say, Let me be there? If there is tract distribution from house to house, shall I not say, I, too, will take a district if I can? If there is Sunday School work, shall I not cry, Let me have a class according to my ability! Let me take a share in this holy enterprise? Know you not that I must be at my Fathers? In my Fathers work and in my Fathers house engaged in all my Fathers concerns? Should not this compulsion, blessed and sweet and irresistible, continually be upon us? I must be where God is! If I am not with His people because I am detained by sickness, yet I must be in my Fathers house! There are many mansions in that great house on earth as well as in Heavenand we can be with God in the streets and in His house when working in the fields! But we must be in our Fathers housewe cannot bear to be away from God. Loss of communion is loss of peace, loss of delight.

Oh, crave fellowship with God! Be covetous of it! Love everything that keeps you init! Hate everything that leads you from it! Rise early to commune with God, before the smoke of earth obscures the face of Heaven. Sit up late to commune with God while dews are falling all around. If you can do nothing else, deny yourself rest and wake in the night to commune with God your Father! Shall not a child love to speak with his Father and hear his Father speak to him? It must be so! It will be so! It cannot help being so with you if you feel the child-spirit strong within you as our blessed Lord and Master did when but 12 years of age!

III. Consider, thirdly, THE HOLY CHILDS OCCUPATION. Although I object to its being the correct reading, Know you not that I must be about My Fathers business?yet we know that this Holy Child would not be in His Fathers house as an idler. He would be sure to be in the Fathers house in the sense of being one of the workers in it. Our Fathers house is a business house and, therefore, we must be in our Fathers business when we are at our Fathers! That is the word. Though the translation which mentions business may be a questionable one, yet it is abundantly lawful to say that this Holy Childs occupation was to be about His Fathers matters.

What, then, did He do? First, He spent His time in learning and enquiring. How I pant to be doing good says some young man. You are right, but you must not be impatient. Go among the teachers and learn a bit. You cannot teach yet, for you do not knowgo and learn before you think of teaching! Hot spirits think that they are not serving God when they are learning, but in this they err. Beloved, Mary at Jesus feet was commended rather than Martha, cumbered with much service! But, says one, we ought not to be always hearing sermons. No, I do not know that any of you are. We ought to get to work at once, cries another! Certainly you ought, after you have first learned what the work is! If everybody that is converted begins to teach, we shall soon have a mess of heresies and many raw and undigested dogmas taught which will rather do damage than good!

Run, messenger, run! The Kings business requires haste! No, rather pause a little. Have you any tidings to tell? First learn your message and then run as fast as you please. There must be time for learning the message. If our blessed Lord waited 30 years, He is an example to eager persons who can scarcely wait 30 minutes! See how fast light things will travel! How eager are those to speak who know nothing! How swift to speak what they do not know and to testify what they have never seen! This comes not of wisdom, but is the untimely fruit of folly. I have heard it said that Dissenters do not go to their chapels for worship, but for hearing sermons. It is not true! But if it were, I beg to say that hearing sermons may be one of the most God-pleasing forms of worship out of Heaven, for in hearing the Gospel as it should be heard, every sacred passion is brought into play and every power of our renewed manhood is made to bow before the Majesty on high!

Faith by embracing the Promise, love by rejoicing in it, hope by expecting its fulfillmentall are worship when the theme is some gracious Word of the Most High! Thought, memory, understanding, emotion are all exercised. I do not know that I have ever worshipped God better than when I have heard a humble, simple-minded man tell out the story of the Cross and of his own conversion. With the tears running down my eyes I have heard the Gospel and adored the living God who has sent it among men! I have so seldom the privilege of hearing a sermon that when I do, it occasions an intense delight which I can scarcely describeI then draw nearer to God than in any other exercise! I suppose it is so with youat any rate, it would be so if the preaching were what it ought to be. True preaching begets worship.

This Holy Child was about His Fathers business when He was simply asking questions and learning of the appointed teachers. In fact, we need to do more of this kind of business. We are meager, lean and weak, because we are frothing at the mouth with talking too much before we have drank in the Truth of God into our inmost souls. Remember, the good matter cannot come out of you if it has never gone into youand if you have no time for receiving instruction, the matter which comes out of you will be of little worth. This Holy Child is about His Fathers business, for He is engrossed in it. His whole heart is in the hearing and asking questions. There is a force, to my mind, in the Greek, which is lost in the translation, which drags in the word, about. There is nothing parallel to it in the Greek, which is, Know you not that I must be

in my Fathers? The way to worship God is to get heartily into it. Blessed is the man whose strength is in You; in whose heart are Your ways.   
We say, sometimes, when preaching, I felt that I got fairly into the subject, and you, yourselves, know when the preacher is really getting into it. Often he is paddling about on the shore of his text and possibly he wades into it up to his ankles. But, oh, when he plunges into the rivers to swim in, then you have grand times! When the precious Truth of God has fairly carried him off his feet, you take a header, too, and swim likewise. Our Lord, when He went into the Temple, became engrossed with its worship and teachingand that was His answer to Mary! He did as good as say, Know you not that I was absorbed in My Fathers? I did not know you were gone. I forgot all about you. Know you not that My soul was in My Fathers? I was so taken up with what I was learning from the doctors and what I was seeing in the Temple that I could not but remain. Did you not know that? Did you not also become absorbed?

He seems to think they might have been as interested as He and they would have been if they bad borne the same relation to God as He did! It is natural that we should become engrossed in our worship. I should not wonder if, sometimes, we were a little rude to those who sat next to us, or moved about a little more than etiquette would suggest; or vented our feelings in involuntary expressions and became troublesome to those next us in the pews, so that they said, What can be the matter with these people? Friends, we have got into the holy engagement and we cannot quite govern ourselves! And we feel as if we could say to you, Know you not that I must be in my Fathers work, worship and Truth? We cannot be half-hearted! We are too happy for that. We are carried clean away. Do you not know that we cannot be proper and calm, for we must be all taken up with our holy service?

Besides, the Holy Child declares that He was under a necessity to be in it. Know you not that I must be in My Fathers? He could not help Himself! Christ could never be a half-hearted pupil or a lukewarm worshipper. It was not possible for Him to be that! He must get absorbed in it; drawn right into the blessed whirlpoolHe must be lost in it and give His whole thought and attention to itand He tells His mother so. Know you not that I must be about My Fathers business? Other things did not interest the Holy Childbut this thing absorbed Him. You know the story of Alexander, that when the Persian ambassadors came to his fathers court, little Alexander asked them many questions, but they were not at all such as boys generally think of.

He did not ask them to describe to him the throne of ivory, nor the hanging gardens of Babylon, nor anything as to the gorgeous apparel of the king. He asked what weapons the Persians used in battle; in what form they marched and how far it was to their country, for the boy Alexander felt the man Alexander within him and he had presentiments that he was the man who would conquer Persia and show them another way of fighting that would make them turn their backs before him! It is a singular parallel to the case of the Child, Jesus, who is taken up with nothing but what is His Fathers because it was for Him to do His Fathers work and to live for His Fathers Gloryand to execute His Fathers purpose even to the last.

IV. Let us, lastly, learn THIS HOLY CHILDS SPECIAL LESSON TO THOSE OF US WHO ARE SEEKERS. Do I address any children of God who have lost sight of Christ? It does happen at times that we miss the Holy Child and it happens most often when we are happy in company and so are taken off from Him. Mary and Joseph were, no doubt, delighted with the festival and so they forgot Jesus. You and I, when in Gods house, may forget the Lord of the House. Did you ever lose Him at His own Table? Did you ever lose Him while engaged in His work? Have you ever missed Him even while you were busy with holy things? When you do, perhaps you will say to Him, Lord, I have sought You long; I have been among Your kinsfolk; I have been to dear saints of God and spoken to them and have said, Have you seen Him whom my soul loves, for I have lost Him?

His answer is, Why have you sought Me? He is not lost to those who long for Him! Cannot you trust Him when He is away? He is all right even when you see Him not! Though He does not always smile, He loves us to the end. If you are not walking in the light of His Countenance, yet you are living in the love of His heart. Jesus sees you when you do not see HimHe has reasons for hiding Himself which are founded in wisdom. Mark, dearly beloved ones, if you and I need to find our Lord, we know where He is. Do we not? He is at His Fathers. Let us go unto His Fatherslet us go to our Father and His Father and let us speak with God and ask Him where Jesus is if we have lost His company. We may be sure that He is in His Fathers work. We are sure of that.

Let us go to work for Him again. Do not let us say, I feel so dull I cannot pray. Now is the time in which we must pray. But I do not feel as if I could praise Him. Now is the time when you must praise Him and the praise will come while you are praising. At times we have no heart for holy exercises and the devil says, Do not go. My dear Friend, be sure to go up to the assemblygo to get the heart for going! Have you begun not to care about Prayer Meetings? Are you going to stay away till you do care about them? Then you will die in indifference! Come and have another turn at them. Those who are most at them, love them best. Does Satan say, with regard to private prayer, You have not the spirit of prayer. You must not pray? Tell the devil you are going to pray for the spirit of prayer and that you will plead till you get it! It is a sign of sickness when you cannot pray and surely, then, you should go to the Physician.

If there is ever a time when a man should pray more than usual, it is when he feels dead and cold in the holy engagementgo and seek Jesus at the Fathers and seek Him in the Fathers workand those of you who have lost communion with Him will find it again. When you take the Sunday school class, again, that you left because you said you had had enough of it. When you go again and preach at the street corneryou have not done that lately. When you begin, again, to be active in the Lords service, then you will again meet with this Blessed One who is about His Fathers business, whether you are or not!

One more word and that is to sinners who are seeking Christ. I would not say a word to discourage any who are seeking Jesus, but I should like to get them far beyond the stage of seeking. Perhaps the Holy Spirit will help them to do so if I read Christs words to them. How is it that you sought ME? Dear, dear! That is, indeed, a turning of things upside down! Our Lord Jesus has come into the world to seek and to save the lostis it not an odd thing when those who are lost get to seeking Him? That is a reversal of all order! How is it, He says, that you sought Me? Now, if I, this morning, am a poor, lost sinner and can honestly say I am seeking Christ, there must be some blunder somewhere! How can this be? How shall I make heads or tails of it? Here is a sheep seeking the shepherd! A lost piece of silver seeking its owner! How can this be?

It will all come right if you will just think of thisfirst, that Jesus Christ is not far away. He is in the Fathers house. Where is the Fathers house? Why, all around us! The great Fathers house covers the whole world and all the stars! He lives everywhere! He dwells not in temples made with hands, like this Tabernacle, or yon cathedralthe Lord God is outside in the fields, in the streetswherever you seek Him. Say not, Who shall climb to Heaven to find, Him, or dive into the deeps to bring Him up? The Word is near you. Here is Christ in the midst of us! What are you looking for, man? Are you seeking for some spirit of the night, or specter of darkness? Jesus is near! Believe in Him!

Remember another thing, that Christ must be about His Fathers business. And what is His Fathers business? Why, to save sinners! This is His great Fathers delight. He is glad to bring His prodigals home. Are you seeking Jesus as if He could not be found, as if it were hard to make Him hear and difficult to win His help? Why, He is busy in saving sinners! Jesus sits on Zions hillHe still receives poor sinners! Be encouraged and do not go about among your kinsfolk seeking Him, nor with bitter tears and cries of despair look for Him as if He were hiding from you! He is not far from any one of us. He stands before you and He bids you trust Him! Look to Him and be saved! Do you look? You are saved! Go on your way rejoicing! God bless you. Amen.

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CHRIST ABOUT HIS FATHERS BUSINESS   
NO. 122

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 15, 1857,**

**BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**Did you not know that I must be about My Fathers business? Luke 2:49.**

Behold then, how great an interest God the Father takes in the work of salvation! It is called, His business. And though Jesus Christ came to accomplish our redemption, came to set us a perfect example and to establish a way of salvation, yet He came not upon His own business but upon His Fathers businessHis Father taking as much interest in the salvation of men as even He, Himself, did! The great heart of the Father was as full of love as the bleeding heart of the Son and the mind of the first Person of the Trinity was as tenderly affected towards His chosen as even the mind of Christ Jesus, our Substitute, our Surety and our All! It is His Fathers business. Behold, also, the condescension of the Son, that He should become the Servant of the Father, to do not His own business, but the Fathers business! See how He stoops to become a Child, subject to His mother. And mark how He stoops to become a Man, subject to God, His Father. He took upon Himself the nature of man and though He was the Son, equal in power with God, who counted it not robbery to be equal with God, yet He, took upon Himself the form of a Servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Learn, then, O Believer, to love all the Persons of the Divine Trinity alike! Remember that salvation is no more the work of One than of the Other. They all three agree in One and as in the Creation they all said, Let Us make man, so in salvation they all say, Let Us save man. And Each of them does so much of it that it is truly the work of Each and undividedly the work of All! Remember that notable passage of Isaiah the ProphetI will divide Him a portion with the great and He shall divide the spoil with the strong. God divides and Christ divides. The triumph is Godsthe Father divides for Him a portion with the great. It is equally Christs He divides the spoil with the strong. Set not one Person before the Other. Reverently adore them alike, for they are OneOne in design, One in character and One in essence! And while they are truly Three, we may in adoration exclaim, Unto the one God of Heaven and earth be Glory, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

But now I shall invite your attention, first, to the spirit of the Savior, as breathed in these words, Did you not know that I must be about My Fathers business? And then, secondly, I shall exhort the children of God with all the earnestness which I can command, with all the intensity of power which I can summon to the point to labor after the same spirit, that they, too, may say, Did you not know that I must be about my Fathers business?

I. First, then, note THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST. It was a spirit of undivided consecration to the will of God, His Father. It was a spirit urged onward by an absolute necessity to serve God. Note the word, must. Did you not know that I must? There is a something in Me which prevents Me from doing other work. I feel an all-controlling, overwhelming influence which compels Me at all times and in every place to be about My Fathers businessthe spirit of high, holy, entire, sincere, determined consecration in heart to God. Did you not know that I must be about My Fathers business?

First, what was the impelling power which (as it were) forced Christ to be about His Fathers business? And then, secondly, how did He do His Fathers business and what was it?

1. What was the impelling power which made Christ say, I must be about My Fathers business?  
In the first place, it was the spirit of obedience which thoroughly possessed itself of His bosom. When He took upon Him the form of a Servant, He received the spirit of an obedient Servant, too. He became as perfect in the capacity of a Servant as He had ever been in that of a Ruler, though in that He had perfectly executed all His life. Beloved Believer! Do you not remember when you were first converted to God, when the young life of your new-born spirit was strong and active, how impetuously you desired to obey God and how intense was your eagerness to serve Him in some way or other? I can well remember how I could scarcely abide myself five minutes without doing something for Christ. If I walked the street, I must have a tract with me. If I went into a railway carriage, I must drop a tract out of the window. If I had a moments leisure, I must be upon my knees or at my Bible. If I were in company, I must turn the subject of conversation to Christ that I might serve my Master! Alas, I must confess, much of that strength of purpose has departed from me, as I doubt not it has from many of you, who, with a greater prominence, have also received diminished zeal. It may be that in the young dawn of life we did imprudent things in order to serve the cause of Christ. But I say, give me back the time, again, with all its imprudence and with all its hastiness, if I might but have the same love to my Master, the same overwhelming influence in my spirit making me obey because it was a pleasure for me to obey God!   
Now, Christ felt just the same way! He must do it. He must serve God. He must be obedient. He could not help it. The Spirit was in Him and would work just as the spirit of disobedience in the wicked impels them to sin. Lust, sometimes, drags the sinner on to sin with a power so strong and mighty that he, poor man, can no more resist it than the sere leaf can resist the tempest! We had lusts so omnipotent that they had but to suggest and we were their willing slaves! We had habits so tyrannical that we could not break their chains. We were impelled to evil, like the straw in the whirlwind, or the chip in the whirlpool. We were hurried wherever our lusts would bear usdrawn away and enticed. Now, in the new heart it is just the same, only in another directionthe spirit of obedience works in us, impelling us to serve our God so that when that spirit is unclogged and free, we may truly say, We must be about our Fathers business. We cannot help it!   
2. But Christ had what few men have. He had another motive for this, another impelling cause. He had a sacred call to the work which He had undertaken and that sacred call forced Him on. You think, perhaps, it is fanatical to talk of sacred calls. But call it fanatical or not, this one thing I knowthe belief in a special call to do a special work is like the arm of omnipotence to a man! Let a man believe that God has set him to do a particular work and you may sneer at himwhat does he care? He would give as much for your sneer as he would for your smile and that is nothing at allhe believes God intends him to do the work! You say nobut he never asked you for your vote upon the question! He has received Gods message, as he thinks, and he goes on and you cannot stop him! If he sits still for a little while, a spirit haunts himhe knows not what it is, but he is unhappy unless he engages in a business which he feels is the commission of his life! If he holds his tongue when God has commanded him to speak, the word is like fire in his bonesit burns its way out, until at last he says, with Elihu, I am filled with matter. I am like a vessel that needs vent. I must speak, or burstI cannot help it! Depend upon it, the men who have done the greatest work for our holy religion have been the men who had the special call to it. I no more doubt the call of Luther than I doubt the call of the Apostles and he did not doubt it either. One of the reasons why Luther did a thing was because other people did not like it.   
When he was about to smite a blow at the Papacy by marrying a nun, all his friends said it was a fearful thing. Luther consulted them and did the deed, perhaps, all the sooner because they disapproved of it! A strange reason it may seem, that a man should do a thing because he was dissuaded from it, but he felt that it was his work to strike the Papacy right and left and for that he would give up everything, even the friendship of friends! His business, by night and by day, was to pray down the pope, to preach down the pope, to write down the pope and do it he must, though often in the roughest, coarsest manner, with iron gauntlets on his hands! It was his workdo it he must! You might have done what you pleased with Luther, even to the tearing out his tongue he would have taken his pen, dipped it in fire and written in burning words, the doom of Papacy! He could not help it, Heaven had forced him to the work! He had a special commission given him from on High and no man could stop him any more than he could stop the wind in its careening, or the tide in its motions!   
Christ had a special work. The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, the Lord has anointed Me to preach glad tidings to the poor. And He felt the effects of this anointingthe power of this impelling! And stop He must not, He could not, He dare not! I must, He said, be about My Fathers business.   
3. But once more, Christ had something which few of us can fully know. He had a vow upon Himthe vow to do the work from all eternity! He had become the Surety of the Covenant! He had sworn that He would execute His Fathers business. He had taken a solemn oath that He would become Man. That He would pay the ransom price of all His Beloved ones. That He would come and do His Fathers business, whatever that might be. Lo, I come, He said, In the volume of the Book, it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O God. Therefore, being faithful and truethe Covenant, the engagement, the suretyship, the sworn promise and the oath made Him say, I must be about My Fathers business. Whenever you make a vow, my dear Friendsand do that very seldomtake care that you keep it. Few should be the vows that men make, but they should always be sincerely kept. God asks no vow of us, but when His Spirit moves us to make a vowand we may do so honestly if we make a vow in His strengthwe are bound to keep it. And he that feels that he has made a vow, must then feel himself impelled to do the work which he has vowed to do. Let the difficulty be ever so great, if you have vowed to overcome it, do it! Let the mountain be ever so high, if you have made a vow to God that you will attempt itscale its summit and never give it up! If the vow is a right one, God will help you to accomplish it. O you upon whom are the vows of the Lord, (and some of you have taken solemn vows upon you, by making a profession of religion), I beseech you, by the sacrament in which you dedicated yourself to your Lord and by that other sacrament in which you found communion with Jesus, to fulfill your vows and pay them daily, nightly, hourly, constantly, perpetually! And let these compel you to say, I must be about my Fathers business. These, I think, were the impelling motives which forced Christ on in His Heavenly labor.

II. Secondly. But now, what was His Fathers business? I think it lay in three thingsexample, establishment, expiation.  
1. One part of His Fathers business was to send into the world a perfect example for our imitation. God had written different books of examples in the lives of the saints. One man was noted for one virtue and another for another. At last God determined that He would gather all His works into one volume and give a condensation of all virtues in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now He determined to unite all the parts into one, to string all the pearls on one necklace and to make them all apparent around the neck of one single Person. The sculptor finds here a leg from some eminent master and there a hand from another mighty sculptor. Here he finds an eye and there a head full of majesty. He says within himself, I will compound those glories, I will put them all together. Then it shall be the model man. I will make the statue par excellence, which shall stand first in beauty and shall be noted ever afterwards as the model of manhood. So said God, There is Jobhe has patience. There is Moseshe has meekness. There are those mighty ones who all have eminent virtues. I will take these, I will put them into one. And the Man, Christ Jesus, shall be the perfect model of future imitation. Now, I say, that all Christs life He was endeavoring to do His Fathers business in this matter. You never find Christ doing a thing which you may not imitate. You would scarcely think it necessary that He should be baptized. But lo, He goes to Jordans stream and dives beneath the waves that He may be buried in Baptism unto death and may rise again though He needed not to riseinto newness of life!   
You see Him healing the sick, to teach us benevolence; rebuking hypocrisy to teach us boldness; enduring temptation to teach us hardness, wherewith, as good soldiers of Christ, we ought to war a good warfare! You see Him forgiving His enemies to teach us the Grace of meekness and of forbearance. You behold Him giving up his very life to teach us how we should surrender ourselves to God and give up ourselves for the good of others. Put Christ at the weddingyou may imitate Him. Yes, Sirs, and you might imitate Him, if you could, in turning water into wine, without a sin! Put Christ at a funeral. You may imitate HimJesus wept. Put Him on the mountaintop. He shall be there alone in prayer and you may imitate Him. Put Him in the crowd. He shall speak so that if you could speak like He, you would speak well. Put Him with enemies. He shall so confound them that He shall be a model for you to copy! Put Him with friends and He shall be a Friend who sticks closer than a brother, worthy of your imitation! Exalt Him, cry hosanna and you shall see Him riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass, meek and lowly! Despise and spit upon Him, you shall see Him bearing contumely and contempt with the same evenness of spirit which characterized Him when He was exalted in the eyes of the world. Everywhere you may imitate Christ! Yes, Sirs and you may even imitate Him in that the Son of Man came eating and drinking and therein fulfilled what He determined to doto pull down the vain Phariseeism of man which says that religion stands in meats and drinks, whereas, Not that which goes into a man defiles a man but that which goes out of a man, that defiles the man. And that is wherein we should take heed to ourselves, lest the inner man be defiled. Never once did He swerve from that bright true mirror of perfection. He was in everything as an Exemplar, always doing His Fathers business!  
2. And so in the matter that I have called establishment, that is the establishment of a new dispensation, that was His Fathers business and therein Christ was always doing it. He went into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Was He doing it, then? Ah, Sirs, He was, for it was necessary that He should be a faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, for in that He, Himself, has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them who are tempted. When He speaks, you can see Him establishing His Word and when He puts the finger of silence to His lips, He is doing it as much, for then was fulfilled the prophecy, He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb. Does He work a miracle? Do the obedient winds hush their tumult at His voice? It is to establish the Gospel, by teaching us that He is Divine! Does He weep? It is to establish the Gospel, by teaching us that He is human! Does He gather the Apostles? It is that they may go abroad in every land, preaching the Word of God! Does He sit upon a well? It is that He may teach a woman and that she may teach the whole city of Samaria the way of salvation! He was always engaged in this work of Example and this work of establishment!   
3. And ah, Beloved, when He came to the climax of His labor, when He came to the greatest toil of all, that which a thousand men could never have donewhen He came to do the great work of Expiation, how thoroughly He did it   
*View Him prostrate in the garden   
On the ground your Maker lies!   
On the bloody tree behold Him   
Hear Him cry before he dies   
IT IS FINISHED!*   
And there you have proof that He was about His Fathers business! It was His Fathers business that made Him sweat great drops of blood. His Fathers business plowed His back with many gory furrows. His Fathers business pricked His temple with the crown of thorns. His Fathers business made Him mocked and spit upon. His Fathers business made Him go about bearing His Cross. His Fathers business made Him despise the shame when, naked, He hung upon the tree. His Fathers business made Him yield Himself to death, though He needed not to die if so He had pleased. His Fathers business made Him tread the gloomy shades of Gehenna and descend into the abodes of death. His Fathers business made Him preach to the spirits in prison. And His Fathers business took Him up to Heaven where He sits at the right hand of God, still doing His Fathers business! His Fathers business makes Him plead day and night for Sion. The same business shall make Him come as the Judge of the quick and the dead, to divide the sheep from the goats. The same business shall make Him gather together in one, all people who dwell on the face of the earth! Oh, glory to You, Jesus! You have done it! You have done Your Fathers business well!  
III. Thus, I have given you the example. Now, let me exhort you to IMITATE IT.   
Tell me, if you can, why the religion of Christ is so very slow in spreading. Mohammed, an imposter, stood up in the streets to preach. He was hooted, stones were thrown at him. Within a month after, he had disciples. A few more years and he had a host behind him. Not a century had rolled away before a thousand scimitars flashed from their scabbards at the bidding of the caliphs! His religion overran nations like wildfire and devoured kingdoms. But why? The followers of the prophet were entirely devoted to his cause. When that Muslim of old spurred his horse into the sea to ride across the straits of Gibraltar and then reined him up and said, I would cross if Allah willed it! There was something in it that told us why his religion was so strong. Ah, those warriors of that time were ready to die for their religion and, therefore, it spread. Can you tell me why Christianity spread so much in primitive times? It was because holy men counted not their lives dear unto them, but were willing to suffer the loss of all things for Christs sake. Paul traverses many countries. Peter ranges through many nations. Philip and the other Evangelists go through various countries, testifying to the Word of God. Sirs, I will tell you why our faith in these days spreads so little. Pardon meit is because the professors of it do not believe it! Do not believe it? Yes! They believe it in the head, but not in the heart. We have not enough of true devotedness to the cause, or else, I am fully persuaded, God would bless Zion with a far greater increase!   
How few there are who have given themselves fully to their religion! They take their religion, like my friend over there has taken that little farm of his. He has a farm of a thousand acres but he thinks he could increase his means, perhaps, by taking a little farm of a hundred acres or so a little way off. And he gives that to a rent-farmer and does not take much trouble about it, himself. It is not very likely he will have very fine farming, there, because he leaves it to somebody else. Just so with religion! Your great farm is your shop, your great aim is your worldly business. You like to keep religion as a snug investment at very small interest, indeed, which you intend to draw out when you get near death! But you do not want to live on it just now. You have enough profit from your own daily business and you do not need religion for everyday life. Sirs, the reason why your religion does not spread is because it has not got root enough in your hearts! How few there are of us who are ready to devote ourselves wholly, bodily and spiritually to the cause of the Gospel of Christ! And if you should attempt to do so, how many opponents you would meet with! Go into the Church Meeting and be a little earnest. What will they say? Why, they will treat you just as Davids brothers did, when David spoke about fighting Goliath. Oh, they said, because of the pride and the naughtiness of your heart, you have come to see the battle. Now, stand aside, do not think you can do anythingaway with you! And if you are in earnest, especially in the ministry, it is just the same. Your Brothers and Sisters pray every SabbathLord, send more laborers into the vineyard! And if God should send them, they wish them safe out of their corner of it, at any rate. They may go anywhere else, but they must not come anywhere near them, for it might affect their congregation, it might stir them up a little! And people might think they did not labor quite earnestly enough! Stand aside! they say. But Brothers, do not mind about that. If you cannot bear to be huffed and trimmed, there is little good in you! If you cannot bear trimming, depend upon it, you cannot yet be well lit! Dare to go on against all the prudence of men and you will find them pat you on the shoulder, by-and-by, and call you, dear Brother. Every man is helped to get up, when he is as high as he can beif you are down, keep him down, is the cry! But if you are getting up, you will never get help till you have done it, yourself. And then men will give you their help when you do not require it. However, your war-cry must be, Did you not know that I must be about my Fathers business?

Again, even the best of your friends, if you are truly zealous of God, will come to you and sayand very kindly, tooNow, you must take a little more care of your constitution. Now, dont be doing so much. Dont, I beseech you! Or if you are giving money awayNow you must be a little more prudent. Take more care of your family. Really, you must not do so. Or if you are earnest in prayer, they will sayThere is no need of such enthusiasm as thisyou know you can be religious and not too religious. You can be moderately so. And so you find both friends and enemies striving to hinder your consecration to Christ! Now, I like what old Rowland Hill said, when someone told him that he was moderately religious. Well then, you are irreligious, for a man that is moderately honest is a rogue for certain! And so the man that is moderately religious is irreligious. If religion is worth anything. it is worth everything! If it is anything, it is everything! Religion cannot go halves with anything else, it must be all. We must, if we are thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Christ, imitate Christ in thisthe giving up of all to Godso that we can sincerely say   
*And if I might make some reserve,   
And duty did not call,   
I love my God with zeal so great,   
That I could give Him all.*   
I shall never forget the circumstance, when after I thought I had made a full consecration to Christ, a slanderous report against my character came to my ears. I fell on my knees and said, Master, I will not keep back even my character for You. If I must lose that, too, then let it go! It is the dearest thing I have, but it shall go. If, like my Master, they shall say I have a devil and am mad, or, like He I am a drunk and a winebibber, it is gone! Just grant me Grace to say, I have suffered the loss of all things. And I do count them but dross that I may win Christ! And you, Christian, will never get on well in serving God till you have given all to Him. That which you keep back will rot! If you reserve the least portion of your time, your property, or your talents and do not give all to Christ, you will find there will be a sore, a gangrene in it! Christ will bless you in all when you give all to Him. But what you keep from Him, He will curse and blight and ruin. He will have all of us, the whole of us, all we possess, or else He will never be satisfied.  
And now let me answer one or two objections and I shall still stir you up, who make a profession of religion, to give up all you have to Christ. You say, Sir, I cannot do it. I am not in the right profession. Well, Sir, you spoke truly when you said that, for if there is a profession that will not allow us to give all to Christ, it is not a right profession and we ought not to follow it at all! But, you say how can I do it? Well what are you? I do not care what you are. I assert it is possible for you to do all things in the name of God and so to give Glory to Christ. Do not think you need be a minister to dedicate yourself to Christ! Many a man has disgraced the pulpit and many a man has sanctified an anvil! Many a man has dishonored the cushion upon which he preached and many a man has consecrated the plow with which he has turned the soil! We ought in all our business, as well as in our sacred acts, to do all for Christ! Let me illustrate this. A merchant in America had devoted a large part of his money for the maintenance of the cause of Christ, and one said to him, What a sacrifice you make every year. Said he, Not so. I have a clerksuppose I give that clerk fifty pounds to pay a schoolmaster and when he goes to the schoolmaster, he should say, Here is your salary, what a sacrifice it is to me to give you that! Why, the schoolmaster would say, Sir, it is not yours, it is no sacrifice at all to you. So said this good man, I gave up all when I came to God. I became His steward and no longer head of the firm. I made God the head of the firm and I became the steward. And now when I distribute my wealth, I only distribute it as His paymasterit is no sacrifice at all. If we talk of sacrifices we make a mistake. Ought not that to be the spirit of our religion? It should be made a sacrifice at first and then afterwards there should be a voluntary offering of all! I keep my shop open, said one, and earn money for God. I and my family live out of itGod allows us to do it. For as a minister lives by the Gospel, He allows me to live by my business and He permits me to provide a competence for old age but that is not my objective. I sell these goods, said another, but the profit I get, God has. That which I require for my own food and raiment and for my household, that God gives back to me, for He has said, bread shall be given me and water shall be sure. But the rest is Gods, not mine. I do it all for God.   
Now you do not understand that theory, do you? It is not business. No, Sirs, but if your hearts were right you would understand it, for it is Gods Gospelthe giving up all to Christ. The giving up of everything to His cause. When we do that, then shall we understand this passage Did you not know that I must be about My Fathers business? For your business, though it is carried on in your name, will, unknown to men, be carried on in Gods name, too! Let me beg of you, however, not to tell everybody if you do it. I have known some that hang the Gospel in the window, more attractively, sometimes, than ribbons! I hate the cant of a man, who, when you go to buy ribbons or pay a bill, asks you to have a tract, or invites you into the back parlor to pray. You will see at once what he is after. He wants to sanctify his counter, so that as people catch flies with honey, he may catch you with religion! Put your religion where it will come out but do not cant about it. If a stranger should call upon you and in a moment exclaim, Let us pray, your best policy is to let him have the street to do it in and you should say, Thank you, I do my praying mostly alone. I see what it is. If I thought you had the spirit of prayer and it had been the proper season, I would have joined with you with all my heart. But the religion of a man who will just step into your house, to let you see what an extraordinary pious man he is, is either very sick, or else it is a galvanized thing that has got no life in it at all! I regard prayer as a very sacred thing. When you pray, enter into your closet. And when you give alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does. For verily if you do it to be seen of men, you have your rewardand a poor one it isa little praise for a minute and it is all gone! But nevertheless, do not run into one extreme by running from another. Consecrate your business by your religion. Do not paint your religion on your side-board, but keep it ready whenever you need it and I am sure you will always need it.   
Says one, How can I do Gods business? I have no talent, I have no money. All I earn in the week, I have to spend and I have scarcely money enough to pay my rent. I have no talent. I could not teach in a Sunday school. Brother, have you a child? Well, there is one door of usefulness for you. Sister, you are very poor. No one knows you. You have a husband and however drunk he may be, there is a door of usefulness for you. Bear up under all his insults, be patient under all his taunts and jeers and you can serve God and do Gods business. But Sir I am sick, it is only today I am able to get out at all. I am always on my bed. You can do your Masters business by lying on a bed of suffering for Him, if you do it patiently. The soldier who is ordered to lie in the trenches is just as obedient as the man who is ordered to storm the breach. In everything you do, you can serve your God. Oh, when the heart is rightly tuned in this matter, we shall never make excuses and say, I cannot be about my Fathers business. We shall always find some business of His to do! In the heroic wars of the Swiss, we read that the mothers would bring cannonballs for the fathers to fire upon the enemy and the children would run about and gather up the shot that sometimes fell, when ammunition ran short. So that all did something. We hate war but we will use the figure in the war of Christ. There is something for you all to do. Oh, let us who love our Master, let us who are bound to serve Him by the ties of gratitudelet us say, Did you not know that I must be about my Fathers business?   
And now I close up by addressing all the Lords people here and urging them to serve God with all their hearts, by giving them two or three very brief and very earnest reasons.  
Be about your Fathers business with all earnestness, because that is the way of usefulness. You cannot do your own business and Gods, too. You cannot serve God and self any more than you can serve God and mammon. If you make your own business, Gods business, you will do your business well and you will be useful in your day and generation. Never shall we see any great revival in the Church or any great triumphs of religion until the Christian world is more touched with the spirit of entire consecration to Christ! When the world shall see us in earnest, then God will bring men innot before! We go to our pulpits in halfheartednesswe go to our place of worship mere shells without the kernel. We give the outward ceremony and take away the heart. We shall never see Christs cause triumphant so. Would you be useful? Would you extend your Masters empire? Then be about your Fathers business!   
Again, would you be happy? Be about your Fathers business. Oh, it is sweet employment to serve your Father! You need not turn aside from the ways of business to do that. If you heart is right, you can serve God in weighing a pound of tea as much as in preaching a sermon! You can serve God as much in driving a horse and cart as in singing a hymn serve God in standing behind your counter at the right time and the right season, as much as sitting in your pews! And oh, how sweet to think, I am doing this for God. My shop is opened on Gods behalf. I am seeking to win profit for God. I am seeking to get business for Gods cause, that I may be able to devote more to it and prosper it more by what I am able voluntarily to consecrate to Him. You will have a happiness when you rise such, as you never knew before, if you can think, I am going to serve God today. And when you end at night, instead of saying, I have lost so much, you will be able to say, Not Imy God has lost it. But the silver and the gold are His and if He does not care to have either of themvery well. Let them go. He shall have it one way or another. I do not need it. If He chooses to take it from me in bad debts, well and good. Let me give to Him in another way, it will be the same. I will revere Him continually, even in my daily avocations.

And this dear Friends, will be the wayand I trust you can be moved by thisthis will be the way to have eternal glory at last, not for the sake of what you do, but as the gracious reward of God for what you have done! They who turn many to righteousness shall be as the stars forever and ever. Would you like to go to Heaven alone? I do not think you would. My happiest thought is thisthat when I die, if it shall be my privilege to enter into rest in the bosom of ChristI know I shall not enter Heaven alone! By His Grace there have been thousands whose hearts have been pricked and have been drawn to Christ under the labors of my ministry. Oh, what a pleasant thing to flap ones wings to Heaven and have a multitude behind! And when you enter Heaven, to say, Here am I and the children You have given me! You cannot preach, perhaps, but you can travail in birth with children for God, in a spiritual sense, in another way, for if you help the cause, you shall share the honor, too! You do that, perhaps, which is not known among men, yet you are the instrument and God shall crown your head with glory among those who are as the stars forever and ever. I think, dear Christian Friends, I need say no more, except to bid you remember that you owe so much to Christ for having saved you from Hell. You owe so much to that blood which redeemed you that you are duty bound to say  
*Here, Lord, I give myself away   
Tis all that I can do.*   
Go out, now, and if you are tempted by the world, may the Spirit enable you to reply, I must be about my Fathers business. Go out and if they call you fanatical, let them laugh at you as much as they liketell them you must be about your Fathers business. Go on and conquer and God be with you!   
And now farewell, with this last word, He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believes not, shall be damned. Faith in Christ is the only way of salvation! You who know your guilt cast yourselves on Christ and then dedicate yourselves to Him. So shall you have joy, here, and glory everlasting in the Presence of the blessed, where bliss is without alloy and joy without end!

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 #1044 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

LOOSENING THE SANDAL STRAP   
NO. 1044

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, MARCH 31, 1872, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**One mightier than I comes, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. Luke 3:16.**

IT was not Johns business to attract followers to himself but to point them to Jesus, and he very faithfully discharged his commission. His opinion of his Master, of whom he was the herald, was a very high one. He reverenced Him as the Anointed of the Lord, the King of Israel, and, consequently, he was not tempted into elevating himself into a rival. He rejoiced to declare, He must increase but I must decrease. In the course of his self-depreciation he uses the expression of our text which is recorded by each one of the Evangelists with some little variation. Matthew words it, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He was not fit to fetch his Lord His shoes.

Mark writes it, whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. And John has it very much as in Luke. This putting on and taking off and putting away of sandals was an office usually left to menial servants. It was not a work of any repute or honor, yet the Baptist felt that it would be a great honor to be even a menial servant of the Lord Jesus. He felt that the Son of God was so infinitely superior to himself that he was honored if only permitted to be the meanest slave in His employ. He would not allow men to attempt comparisons between himself and Jesushe felt that none could, for a moment, be allowed.

Now this honest estimate of himself as less than nothing in comparison with his Master is greatly to be imitated by us. John is to be commended and admired for this, but better still he is to be carefully copied. Remember that John was by no means an inferior man. Among all that had been born of women before his time there had not been a greater than he. He was the subject of many prophecies and his office was a peculiarly noble one. He was the friend of the great Bridegroom and introduced Him to His chosen bride. He was the morning star of the Gospel day, but he counted himself no light in the Presence of the Sun of Righteousness whom he heralded. The temperament of John was not that which bowed or cringedhe was no reed shaken by the windno man of courtly habits fitted for a kings palace.

No. We see in him an Elijah, a man of iron, a son of thunder. He roared like a young lion on his prey and feared the face of none. Some men are so naturally meek-spirited, not to say weak-minded, that they naturally become subservient and set up others as their leaders. Such men are apt to err in depreciating themselves. But John was every inch a manhis great soul bowed only before that which was worthy of homage. He was, in Gods strength, as an iron pillar and a bronze wall. He was a hero for the cause of the Lord, and yet he sat down in the Presence of Jesus as a little child sits on a stool at his masters feet, and he cried, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and to loose.

Remember, moreover, that John was a man endowed with great abilities and these are very apt to make a man proud. He was a Prophet, yes, and more than a Prophet. When he stood in the wilderness to preach, his burning eloquence soon attracted the people from Jerusalem and from all the cities round about! The banks of Jordan saw a vast multitude of eager hearers crowding around the man clothed with a garment of camels hair. Thousands gathered together to listen to the teaching of one who had not been brought up at the feet of the rabbis, neither had been taught eloquence after the fashion of the schools!

John was a man of bold, plain, telling, commanding speech! He was no second-rate teacher, but a master in Israel. Yet he assumed no airs of self-conceit, but accounted the lowest place in the Lords service as too high for him. Note, too, that he was not only a great preacher, but he had been very successfulnot only in attracting the crowdsbut in baptizing them. The whole nation felt the effects of Johns ministry and knew that he was a Prophet! They were swayed to and fro by his zealous words, as the corn of autumn is moved in the breath of the wind. A man is very apt, when he feels that he has power over masses of his fellow creatures, to be lifted up and exalted above measure, but not so John! It was safe for the Lord to trust him with a great popularity and a great success, for though he had all those honors he laid them meekly down at Jesus feet, and said, I am not worthy to be even the lowest slave in Messiahs household.

Remember, also, that John was a religious leader and he had the opportunity, if he had pleased, of becoming the leader of a powerful sect. The people were evidently willing to follow him. There were some, no doubt, who would not have gone over to Christ, Himself, if John had not bid them go, and testified, Behold the Lamb of God, and confessed over and over again, saying, I am not the Christ. We read of some, who years after the Baptist was dead, still remained his disciples so that he had the opportunity of leading away a multitude who would have become his followers, and so of setting up his own name among men. But he scorned it!

His elevated view of his Master prevented his entertaining any desire for personal leadership. Putting himself down not in the place of a captain of the lords hosts, but as one of the least soldiers in the army, he says, His sandal straps I am not worthy to loose. What was the reason, do you think, of Johns always retaining his proper position? Was it not because he had a high idea of his Master and a deep reverence for Him? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, because of our little estimate of Christ it is often unsafe for the Lord to trust us in any but the very lowest positions. I believe many of us might have been 10 times as usefulonly it would not have been safe for God to have allowed us to be sowe would have been puffed up and, like Nebuchadnezzar, we would have boasted, Behold this great Babylon that I have built.

Many a man has had to fight in the back ranks and serve his Master but littleand enjoy but little success in that service because he did not reverence Christ enoughdid not love his Lord enough, and, consequently self would soon have crept in to his own overturningto the grief of the Church, and to the dishonor of his Lord. Oh, for high thoughts of Christ, and low thoughts of ourselves! Oh, to see Jesus as All in All, and to see ourselves as less than nothing before Him!

Having thus introduced the subject, our object this morning is to draw instruction from the expression which John here and elsewhere used with regard to himself and his LordWhose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. I gather from this, first, that no form of holy service is to be lightly esteemed. Secondly, that our unworthiness is apparent in the presence of any sort of holy work. And that, thirdly, this unworthiness of ours, when most felt, should rather stimulate us to action than discourage usfor so it doubtless operated in the case of John the Baptist.

I. First, then, note THAT NO FORM OF HOLY SERVICE IS TO BE LIGHTLY ESTEEMED. To unloose the straps of Christs sandals might seem very trivial. It might even seem as if it involved the loss of selfrespect for a man of position and influence to stoop to offices which a servant might quite as well perform. Why should I bring myself down to that? I will learn of ChristI will distribute bread among the multitude for ChristI will have my boat by the sea shore ready for Christ to preach in, or I will go and fetch the donkey upon which He shall ride in triumph into Jerusalem. But what need can there be for the disciple to become a mere menial?

Such a question as that is here forever silenced and the spirit which dictates it is practically rebuked. Nothing is dishonorable by which Jesus may be honored! Nothing lowers a man, if, thereby, he honors his Lord! It is not possible for any godly work to be beneath our dignityrather ought we to know that the lowest grade of service bestows dignity upon the man who heartily performs it. Even the least and most obscure form of serving Christ is more high and lofty than we are worthy to undertake.

Now, note that little works for Christlittle sandal bearings and strap loosening often have more of the childs spirit in them than greater works. Outside, in the streets, a mans companion will do him a kindness and the action performed is friendly. But for filial acts you must look inside the house. There the child does not lend money to its father, or negotiate businessyet in his little acts there is more than sonship. Who is it that comes to meet Father when the day is over? And what is the action which often indicates childhoods love? Look, the little child comes tottering forward with fathers slippers and runs off with his boots as he takes them off! The service is little, but it is loving and filialand has more of filial affection in it than the servants bringing in the meal, preparing the bed, or any other more essential service. It gives the little one great pleasure and expresses his love.

No one who is not my child, or who does not love me in something like the same way, would ever dream of making such a service his specialty. The littleness of the act fits it to the childs capacity, and there is also something in it which makes it a suitable expression of a childs affection. So, also, in little acts for Jesus! Oftentimes men of the world will give their money to the cause of Christ, putting down large sums for charity or for missions. But they will not weep in secret over other mens sins, or speak a word of comfort to an afflicted saint. To visit a poor sick woman, teach a little child, reclaim a street Arab, breathe a prayer for enemies or whisper a promise in the ear of a desponding saint may show more of sonship than building a row of almshouses or endowing a Church! In little acts for Christ it is always to be remembered that the little things are as necessary to be done as the greater acts.

If Christs feet are not washed. If His sandals are not loosed He may suffer and His feet may be lamed so that a journey may be shortened, and many villages may miss the blessing of His Presence. So with other minor things. There is as much need for the quiet intercessions of saints as for the public delivery of Gods Truth before the assembled thousands. It is as necessary that babes be taught their little hymns as that monarchs be rebuked for sin. We remember the old story of the losing of the battle through the missing of a single nail in a horseshoe, and perhaps up to this moment the Church may have lost her battle for Christ because some minor work which ought to have been done for Jesus has been neglected.

I should not wonder if it should turn out that many Churches have been without prosperity because, while they have looked to the public ministry and the visible ordinances, they have been negligent of smaller service to their Master. Many a cart comes to grief through inattention to the linchpin. A very small matter turns an arrow aside from the target. To teach a child to sing, Gentle Jesus, and to point its young heart to the Redeemer may seem a trifle, but yet it may be a most essential part of the process of that gracious work of religious education by which that child shall afterwards become a Believer, a minister and a winner of souls! Omit that first lesson and it may be you have turned aside a life.

Take another instance. A preacher once found himself obligated to preach in an obscure village. The storm was terrible, and, therefore, though he kept his appointment, he found only one person present in the place of meeting. He preached a sermon to that one hearer with as much earnestness as if the house had been crowded. Years later he found Churches all over the district, and he discovered that his audience of one had been converted on that day and had become the Evangelist of the whole region! Had he declined to preach to one, what blessings might have been withheld! Brethren, never neglect the loosing of the sandal strap for Christ since you do not know what may hang upon it.

Human destiny often turns upon a hinge so small as to be invisible. Never say within yourself, This is trivialnothing is trivial for the Lord! Never say, But this surely might be omitted without much loss. How do you know? If it is your duty, He who allotted you your task knew what He did. Do not you, in any measure, neglect any portion of His orders, for in all His commands there is consummate wisdomand on your part it will be wisdom to obey them, even to the jots and tittles. Little things for Christ, again, are often the best tests of the truth of our religion. Obedience in little things has much to do with the character of a servant. You engage a servant in your own house and you know very well whether she is a good or bad servant if the main duties of the day are pretty sure to be attended to. The meals will be cooked, the beds will be prepared, the house will be swept, the door will be answeredbut the difference between a servant who makes the house happy and another who is its plague lies in a number of small matters, which, perhaps, you could not put down on paperbut which make up a very great deal of domestic comfort or discomfort, and so determine the value of a servant.

So I believe it is in Christian life. I do not suppose that the most of us here would ever omit the weightier matters of the Law. As Christian men we endeavor to maintain integrity and uprightness in our actions, and we try to order our households in the fear of God in great matters. But it is in the looking to the Lord upon minor details that the spirit of obedience is most displayed. It is seen in our keeping our eyes up to the Lord, as the eyes of the handmaidens are to their mistresses for daily orders about this step and that transaction. The really obedient spirit wishes to know the Lords will about everything, and if there is any point which to the world seems trifling, for that very reason the obedient spirit says, I will attend to it to prove to my Lord that even in the minutiae I desire to submit my soul to His good pleasure.

In small things lie the crucibles and the touchstones. Any hypocrite will come to Lords-Day worship, but it is not every hypocrite that will attend Prayer Meetings, or read the Bible in secret, or speak privately of the things of God to the saints. These are less things, so they judge, and therefore they neglect them and so condemn themselves! Where there is deep religion, prayer is lovedwhere religion is shallow only public acts of worship are cared for. You shall find the same true in other things. A man who is no Christian will very likely not tell you a downright lie by saying that black is white, but he will not hesitate to declare that whitey-brown is whitehe will go that length.

But the Christian will not go halfway to falsehood, no, he scorns to go an inch on that road! He will no more cheat you out of two pence farthing, than he would out of 2,000 pounds. He will not rob you of an inch any more than of an yard! It is in the little that the genuineness of the Christian is made to appear. The Goldsmiths hallmark is a small affair, but you know true silver by it. There is a vast deal of difference between the man who gladly bears Christs sandals and another who will not stoop to anything which he thinks beneath him. Even a Pharisee will ask Christ to his house to sit at meat with himhe is willing to entertain a great religious leader at his table. But it is not everyone who will stoop down and loose His sandal straps, for that very Pharisee who made the feast neither brought Him water to wash His feet, nor gave Him the kiss of welcome. He proved the insincerity of his hospitality by forgetting the little things.

I will be bound to say Martha and Mary never forgot to loose His sandal straps and that Lazarus never failed to see that His feet were washed. Look then, I pray you, as Christians, to the service of Christ in the obscure things, in the things that are not recognized by menin the matters which have no honor attached to themfor by this shall your love be tried. Mark, with regard to little works, that very often there is about them a degree of personal fellowship with Christ which is not seen in greater work. For instance, in the one before us, to unloose the straps of His sandals brings me into contact with Himself, though it is only His feet I touch.

And I think if I might have the preference between going forth to cast out devils and to preach the Gospel and to heal the sick, or to stay with Him and always loose His sandal straps, I should prefer this last, because the first act Judas didhe went with the 12 and saw Satan, like lightning, fall from Heavenbut he perished because he failed in the acts that came into contact with Christ. In keeping Christs purse he was a thief, and in giving Christ the kiss he was a traitor. He who does not fail in things relating personally to Christ is the sound manhe has the evidence of righteousness of heart. There was never a grander action done beneath the stars than when the woman broke her alabaster box of precious ointment and poured it upon Him! Though the poor did not get anything out of it. Though no sick man was the better for itthe act was done distinctly unto Himand therefore there was a peculiar sweetness in it.

Oftentimes similar actions, because they do not encourage other people, for they do not know of thembut because they may not be of any very great value to our fellow menare lightly esteemed. Yet seeing they are done for Christ, they have about them a peculiar charm as terminating upon His blessed Person. True, it is but the loosening of sandal straps, but then they are His sandals and that ennobles the deed! Dear fellow Christians, you know what I mean, though I cannot put it into very good language this morning.

I mean just thisthat if there is some little thing I can do for Christ though my minister will not know about it, though the deacons and elders will not know and nobody will know. And if I leave it undone nobody will suffer any calamity because of it, but, if I do it, it will please my Lord and I shall enjoy the sense of having done it for Him, therefore will I attend to it, for it is no slight work if it is for Him. Mark, also, once more, concerning those gracious actions which are but little esteemed by the most of mankind, that we know God accepts our worship in little things! He allowed His people to bring their bullocks, others of them to bring their rams, and offer them to Him. And these were persons of sufficient wealth to be able to afford a tribute from their herds and flocks.

But He also permitted the poor to offer a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons, and I have never found in Gods Word that He cared less for the turtledove offering than He did for the sacrifice of the bullock. I do know, too, that our ever blessed Lord, Himself, when He was here, loved the praise of little children. They brought neither gold nor silver like the wise men from the East, but they cried, Hosanna, and the Lord was not angry with their HosannasHe accepted their boyish praise. And we remember that a widow woman cast into the treasury two mites, which only made a farthing, but, because it was all her living, He did not reject the gift, but rather recorded it to her honor.

We are now quite familiar with the incident, but for all that it is very wonderful. Two mites that make a farthing given to the infinite God! A farthing accepted by the King of kings! A farthing acknowledged by Him who made the heavens and the earth, who says, If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the cattle on a thousand hills are Mine. Two mites received with pleasure by the Lord of All! It was scarcely so much as a drop thrown into the sea, and yet He thought much of it! Measure not little actions by human scales and measures, but estimate them as God doesfor the Lord has respect unto the hearts of His people. He regards not so much their deeds in themselves as the motives by which they are actuated. Therefore, value the loosing of the Saviors sandal straps, and despise not the day of small things.

II. Now, Brothers and Sisters, I wish to conduct you, in the second place, to the consideration of OUR OWN UNWORTHINESS, which is sure to be felt by us whenever we come practically into contact with any real Christian service. I believe, as a general rule, that a man who does nothing at all thinks himself a fine fellow. You shall usually find that the sharpest critics are those who never write, and the best judges of battles are those who keep at a prudent distance from the guns.

Christians of the kid-gloved order, who never make an attempt to save souls, are marvelously quick to tell us when we are too rough or too light in our speechand they readily detect us if our modes of action are irregular or too enthusiastic. They have a very keen sense for anything like fanaticism or disorder. For my part, I feel pretty safe when I have the censures of these gentlemenwe are not far wrong when they condemn us! Let a man begin earnestly to work for the Lord Jesus and he will soon find out that he is unworthy of the meanest place in the employ of One so glorious! Let us turn over that fact a minute.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, when we remember what we used to be I am sure we must feel unworthy to do the very least thing for Christ. You know how Paul describes the wickedness of certain offenders, and he adds, But such were some of you? What hardness of heart some of us exhibited towards God! What rebellion! What obstinacy! What quenching of His Spirit! What love of sin! Why, if I might stoop down to loose the sandal strap of that foot which was crucified for me, I must bedew the nail print with my tears, and say, My Savior, can it be that I am allowed to touch Your feet? Surely, the prodigal, if he ever unloosed his fathers shoes, could say to himself, Why, these hands fed swine! These hands were often polluted by harlots! I lived in uncleanness, and was first a reveler, and then a swineherd, and it is amazing love which permits me, now, to serve so good a father. Angels in Heaven might envy the man who is permitted to do the least thing for Christ, and yet they never sinned! Oh, what a favor that we who are defiled with sin should be called to serve the sinless Savior!

But, then, another reflection comes at the back of itwe recollect what we are as well as what we wereI say what we are, for though washed in Jesus blood and endowed with a new heart and a right spirit, yet we start aside like a deceitful bow, for corruption dwells in us! It is sometimes hard work to maintain even a little faith. We are so double-minded, so unstable, so hot, so cold, so earnest, and then so negligent. We are so everything except what we ought to be, that we may well wonder that Christ allows us to do the least thing for Him! If he were to shut us in prison and keep us there, so long as He did not actually execute us He would be dealing with us according to mercy and not giving us our full deserts! Yet He calls us out of prison and puts us in His service, and therefore we feel that we are unworthy to perform the least action in His House.

Besides, Beloved, even small services, we feel, require a better state of heart than we often have. I am sure the service of preaching the Gospel here often brings to my sight my unworthiness far more than I should otherwise see it. If it is a gracious thing to see ones sinfulness, I may thank God I preach the Gospel, for it makes me see it. Sometimes we come to preach about Jesus Christ and glorify Him and yet our heart is not warm towards Him and we do not value Him aright. While the text we are preaching from seats Him on a high throne, our heart is not setting Him there. And oh, then we think we could tear our heart out of our very body if we could get rid of the black drops of its depravity which prevent our feeling in unison with the glorious Truth before us!

Another time, perhaps, we have to invite sinners and seek to bring them to Christ, and that needs so much sympathy that if Christ were preaching our sermon He would bedew it with His tearsbut we deliver it with dry eyes, almost without emotionand then we flog our hard heart that it will not stir and cannot be made to feel. It is just the same in other duties. Have you not felt, I have to go and teach my class this afternoon, but I am not fit, I have been worried all the week with cares and my mind is not up to the mark now. I hope I love my Lord, but I hardly know whether I do or not. I ought to be earnest about these boys and girlsbut it is very likely I shall not be earnestI shall sit down and go through my teaching as a parrot would go through it, without life, without love? Yes, then you painfully feel that you are not worthy to loose the straps of your Lords sandals.

Possibly you are going, this afternoon to visit a dying man and you will try and talk to him about the way to Heaven. He is unconverted. Now, you need a tongue of fire to speak with, and instead of that you have a tongue of ice! You feel, O God, how can it be that I shall sit by that bedside and think of that poor man who will be in the flames of Hell, perhaps, within a week, unless he receives Christ, and yet I shall treat his tremendously perilous condition as though it were a matter of the very slightest consequence? Yes, yes, yes we have had hundreds of times to feel that we are in and of ourselves not fit for anything! If the Lord wanted dishwashers in His kitchen, He could get better than we are! And if He needed someone to shovel out the refuse of His house, He could find better men than we are for that. To such a Master we are unworthy to be servants.

The same feeling arises in another way. Have we not to confess, Brothers and Sisters, in looking upon what we have done for Christ, that we have far too much eye to self in our conduct? We pick and choose our work, and the picking and choosing is guided by the instinct of selfrespect. If we are asked to do that which is pleasant to ourselves we do it. If we are requested to attend a meeting where we shall be received with acclamation. If we are asked to perform a service which will lift us up in the social scale, or that will commend us to our fellow Christians, we jump at it like a fish at a fly! But, suppose the work would bring us shame? Suppose it would reveal to the public our inefficiency rather than our ability? We excuse ourselves!

The spirit which Moses felt a little of when the Lord called him, is upon many of us. If I were to speak for Christ, says one, I should stutter and stammer. As if God did not make stuttering mouths as well as intent mouths, and as if, when He chose a Moses, He did not know what He was doing! Moses must go and stammer for God and glorify God by stammering! But Moses does not like thatand many in similar cases have not had Grace enough to go to the work at all. Why, if I cannot honor the Lord with 10 talents, shall I refuse to serve Him with one? If I cannot fly like a strong-winged angel through the midst of Heaven and sound the shrill-mouthed trumpet so as to wake the dead, shall I refuse to be a little bee and gather honey at Gods bidding? Because I cannot be a leviathan, shall I refuse to be an ant? What folly and what rebellion if we are so perverse!

And, if you have performed any holy work, have you not noticed that pride is ready to rise? God can hardly let us succeed in any work but what we become big-headed. Oh, how well we have done it! We do not need anybody to say, Now, that was very cleverly, and nicely, and carefully, and earnestly done, for we say all that to ourselves, and we add, yes, you were zealous about that work, and you have been doing what a great many would not have done, and you have not boasted of it either! You do not call in any neighbor to see it. You have been doing it simply out of love to God, and, therefore, you are an uncommonly humble fellow and none can say you are vain.

Alas, what flattery, but truly, the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. We are not worthy to loose the straps of Jesus sandals because, if we do, we begin to say to ourselves, What great folks we are. We have been allowed to loose the Lords sandal straps. If we do not tell somebody else about it with many an exultation, we at least tell ourselves about it and feel that we are something, after all, and ought to be held in no small repute! My Brothers and Sisters, we ought to feel that we are not worthy to do the lowest thing we can do for Christ because, when we have gone to the lowest, Jesus always goes lower down than we have gone!

Is it a little thing to bear His shoes? What, then, was His condescension when He washed His disciples feet? To put up with a cross-tempered brother, to be gentle with him, and feel, I will give way to him in everything because I am a Christianthat is going very lowbut then our Lord has borne far more from us! He was patient with His peoples infirmities and forgave even to 70 times seven. And suppose we are willing to take the lowest place in the Church, yet Jesus took a lower place than we can, for He took the place of the curseHe was made sin for us, even He that knew no sinthat we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

I have sometimes felt willing to go to the gates of Hell to save a soul, but the Redeemer went further, for He suffered the wrath of God for souls. If there should be any Christian here who is so humble that he has no lofty thoughts about himself, but prefers to be least among his brethren and so proves his graciousness, yet, my dear Brother, you are not so lowly as Christ made Himself, for He made Himself of no reputation, and you have some reputation left. And He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and He became obedient to deathyou have not come to that yeteven the death of the Cross. The felons death upon the gallowsyou will never be brought to that.

Oh, the condescending of the Redeemers amazing love! Let us, from this hour on, contend how low we can go side by side with Him. But remember when we have gone to the lowest, He descends lower stillso that we can truly feel that the very lowest place is too high for us because He has gone lower. Beloved Friends, to put these things in a practical shape it may seem to be a very small duty for any of you to doto speak to one person alone about his soul. If you were asked to preach to a hundred you would try it. I ask you solemnly, in Gods name, not to let the sun go down today till you have spoken to one man or woman, alone, about his or her soul. Will you do that? Is it too little for you? Then I must be honest with you and say you are not worthy to do it.

Speak today to some little child about his soul. Do not say, Oh, we cannot talk to children, we cannot stoop to them. Let no such feeling occupy any of our minds, for if this work is as the loosing of the Masters sandal straps, let us do it. Holy Brainerd, when he was dying and could no longer preach to the Indians, had a little Indian boy at his bedside, and taught him his letters. And he remarked to one who came in, I asked God that I might not live any longer than I could be of use, and so, as I cannot preach any more, I am teaching this poor little child to read the Bible. Let us never think that we are stooping when we teach children! But if it is stooping let us stoop!

There are some of you, perhaps, who have the opportunity to do good to fallen women. Do you shrink from such work? Many do. They feel as if they could do anything rather than speak to such. Is it the loosening of the straps of your Masters sandals? It is, then, an honorable business! Try it, Brother. It is not beneath you if you do it for Jesus. It is even above the best of youyou are not worthy to do it. Possibly there is near your house a district of very poor people. You do not like going in among them. They are dirty and perhaps infected with disease. Well, it is a pity that poor people should so often be dirty, but pride is dirty, too.

Do you say, I cannot go there? Why not? Are you such a mighty fine gentleman that you are afraid of soiling your hands? You will not unloose your Masters sandal strap, then, is that it? The Lord lived among the poor, and was poorer even than they, for He had nowhere to lay His head. Oh, shame on you, you wicked and proud servant of a condescending, loving Lord! Go about your business and unloose the straps of His sandals! Instead of imagining that you would be lowered by such work for Jesus, I tell you it would honor you! Indeed, you are not fit for itthe honor is too great for youand it will fall to the lot of better men. It comes to this, Belovedanything that can be done for Christ is too good for us to do!

Somebody wanted to keep the door! Somebody wanted to rout out the back lanes! Somebody wanted to teach ragged roughs! Somebody wanted to ask people to come to the place of worship and to lend them their seats, and stand in the aisle while they sit. Well, be it what it may, I had rather be a door keeper in the House of the Lord, or the doormat, even, than I would be accounted among the noblest in the tents of wickedness. Anything for Jesus, the lower the better! Anything for Jesus, the humbler the better! Anything for Jesus! The more going down into the deeps! The more thrusting the arms up to the elbows in the mud to find precious jewels! The more of that the better!

This is the true spirit of the Christian religion. Not the soaring up there to sit among the choristers and sing in grand style! Not the putting on of apparel and preaching in lawn sleeves! Not the going through gaudy and imposing ceremoniesall that is of Babylonbut to strip yourself to the shirt sleeves to fight the battle for Christ! To go out among men as a humble worker, resolved by any means to save somethis is what your Lord would have you to do, for this is the unloosing the straps of His sandals.

III. And, now, our last remark shall be that ALL THIS OUGHT TO STIMULATE US AND NOT DISCOURAGE US. Though we are not worthy to do it, that is the reason why we should avail ourselves of the condescending Grace which honors us with such employ. Do not say, I am not worthy to loose the straps of His sandals, and therefore, I shall give up preaching. Oh no! But preach away with all the greater vigor! John did so, and to his preaching he added warning. Warn people as well as preach to them! Tell them of the judgment to come and separate between the precious and the vile.

We should perform our work in all ways, not omitting the more painful part of it, but going through with whatever God has appointed to us. John was called to testify of Christ. He felt unworthy to do it, but he did not shirk the work. It was his life-long business to cry, Behold, behold, behold the Lamb of God! and he did it earnestly. He never paused in that cry. He was busy in baptizing, too. It was the initiatory rite of the new dispensation, and there he stood continually immersing those who believed! Never a more indefatigable worker than John the Baptisthe threw his whole soul into it because he felt he was not worthy to do the work!

Brothers and Sisters, your sense of unworthiness will, if you are idle, sadly hamper you! But if the love of God is in your soul, you will feel, Since I do so badly when I do my best, I will always do my utmost. Since it comes to so little when the most is done, I will at least do the most. Could I give all my substance to Him, and give my life, and then give my body to be burned it would be a small return for love so amazing, so Divine, as that which I have tasted! Therefore, if I cannot do all that, at any rate I will give the Lord Jesus all I can. I will love Him all I can. I will pray to Him all I can. I will talk about Him all I can, and I will spread His Gospel all I can. And no little thing will I count beneath me if His cause requires it.

Brethren, John lived hard, for his meat was locusts and wild honey. His dress was not the soft raiment of men who live in palaces. He wrapped about him the rough camels skin, and as he lived hard he died hard, toohis boldness brought him into a dungeon. His courageous fidelity earned him a martyrs death. Here was a man who lived in self-denial and died witnessing for the Truth of God and righteousnessand all this because he had a high esteem of his Master. May our esteem of Christ so grow and increase that we may be willing to put up with anything in life for Christ, and even to lay down our lives for His names sake!

Certain Moravian missionaries, in the old times of slavery, went to one of the West Indian Islands to preach and they found they could not be permitted to teach there unless they, themselves, became slaves. And they did sothey sold themselves into bondage, never to returnthat they might save slaves souls. We have heard of another pair of holy men who actually submitted to be confined in a leper house that they might save the souls of lepers, knowing as they did that they would never be permitted to come out again. They went there to take the leprosy and to die, if by so doing they might save souls.

I have read of one, Thome de Jesu, who went to Barbary among the Christian captives, and there lived and died in banishment and bondage that he might cheer his Brothers and Sisters and preach Jesus to them. Brethren, we have never reached to such devotion! We fall far short of what Jesus deserves. We give Him littlewe give Him what we are ashamed not to give Him. Often we give Him our zeal for a day or two and then grow cool. We wake up all of a sudden and then sleep all the more soundly. We seem, today, as if we would set the world on fire, and tomorrow we scarcely keep our own lamp trimmed. We vow at one time that we will push the Church before us and drag the world after us, but by-and-by we, ourselves, are like Pharaohs chariots with the wheels taken offand drag along right heavily.

Oh, for a spark of the love of Christ in the soul! Oh, for a living flame from off Calvarys altar to set our whole nature blazing with Divine enthusiasm for the Christ who gave Himself for us that we might live! From this hour on take upon yourselves in the solemn intent of your soul this deep resolveI will loose the sandal straps. I will seek out the little things, the mean things, the humble things. And I will do them as unto the Lord and not unto menand may He accept me even as He has saved me through His precious blood. Amen.

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THE PREPARATORY PRAYERS OF CHRIST   
NO. 3178

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30TH, 1909,

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 7, 1873.

**Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.   
Luke 3:21, 22.**

**And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.   
Luke 6:12,13.**

**And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.   
Luke 9:28, 29.**

**And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.   
Matthew 14:23-25.**

**Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead were laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me.**

**John 11:41, 42.**

**And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren. Luke 22:31, 32.**

**And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. Luke 23:46.**

THERE is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a Man of much prayer. He was mighty as a Preacher, for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, Never man spoke like this Man. But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible! We do not read that His disciples ever asked Him to teach them to preach, but we are told that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray. He had no doubt been praying with such amazing fervor that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer and they, therefore, desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a Man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful Man. His words speak to us like the words of One whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of Heaven! He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

Prayer seems to be like a silver thread running through the whole of our Saviors life and we have the record of His prayers on many special occasions. It struck me that it would be both interesting and instructive for us to notice some of the seasons which Jesus spent in prayer. I have selected a few which occurred either before some great work or some great suffering, so our subject will really be the preparatory prayers of Christthe prayers of Christ as He was approaching something which would put a peculiar stress and strain upon His Manhood, either for service or for suffering. And if the consideration of this subject shall lead all of us to learn the practical lesson of praying at all timesand yet to have special seasons for prayer just before any peculiar trial or unusual servicewe shall not have met in vain!

I. The first prayer we are to consider is OUR LORDS PRAYER IN PREPARATION FOR HIS BAPTISM. It is in Luke 3:21, 22Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying, (it seems to have been a continuous act in which He had been previously occupied), the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.

The Baptism of our Lord was the commencement of His manifestation to the sons of men. He was now about to take upon Himself in full all the works of His Messiahship and, consequently, we find Him very specially engaged in prayer. And, Beloved, it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate that when any of us have been converted and are about to make a Scriptural profession of our faithabout to take up the soldiers life under the great Captain of our salvationabout to start out as pilgrims to Zions cityI say that it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate for us to spend much time in very special prayer! I would be very sorry to think that anyone would venture to come to be baptized, or to be united with a Christian Church without having made that action a matter of much solemn consideration and earnest prayer. But when the decisive step is about to be taken, our whole being should be very specially concentrated upon our supplication at the Throne of Grace.

Of course we do not believe in any sacramental efficacy attaching to the observance of the ordinance, but we receive a special blessing in the act, itself, because we are moved to pray even more than usual before it takes place and at the time. At all events, I know that it was so in my own case. It was many years ago, but the remembrance of it is very vivid at this moment and it seems to me as though it only happened yesterday! It was in the month of May and I rose very early in the morning so that I might have a long time in private prayer. Then I had to walk about eight miles, from Newmarket to Isleham, where I was to be baptized in the river. I think that the blessing I received that day resulted largely from that season of solitary supplication and my meditation, as I walked along the country roads and lanes, upon my indebtedness to my Savior and my desire to live to His praise and Glory. Dear young people, take care that you start right in your Christian life by being much in prayer! A profession of faith that does not begin with prayer will end in disgrace. If you come to join the Church, but do not pray to God to uphold you in consistency of life, and to make your profession sincere, the probability is that you are already a hypocrite! Or if that is too uncharitable a suggestion, the probability is that if you are converted, the work has been of a very superficial character and not of that deep and earnest kind of which prayer would be the certain index. So again I say to you that if any of you are thinking of making a profession of your faith in Christ, be sure, then, in preparation for it, you devote a special season to drawing near to God in prayer.

As I read the first text, no doubt you noticed that it was while Christ was praying that, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased. There are three occasions of which we read in Scripture when God bore audible testimony to Christ. And on each of these three occasions He was either in the act of prayer or He had been praying but a very short time before. Christs prayer is especially mentioned in each instance side by side with the witness of His Fatherand if you, beloved Friends, want to have the witness of God either at your Baptism or on any subsequent act of your lifeyou must obtain it by prayer! The Holy Spirit never sets His seal to a prayerless religion! It has not in it that of which He can approve. It must be truly said of a man, Behold, he prays, before the Lord bears such testimony concerning him as He bore concerning Saul of Tarsus, He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles.

So we find that it was while Christ was praying at His Baptism that the Holy Spirit came upon Him, in a bodily shape like a dove, to qualify Him for His public service! And it is through prayer that we, also, receive that spiritual enrichment that equips us as co-workers together with God. Without prayer you will remain in a region that is desolate as a desert! But bend your knees in supplication to the Most High and you have reached the land of promise, the country of benediction! Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you, not merely as to His gracious Presence, but as to the powerful and efficacious working of the Holy Spirit! More prayermore power! The more pleading with God that there is, the more power will there be in pleading with men, for the Holy Spirit will come upon us while we are pleading and so we shall be fitted and qualified to do the work to which we are called of God!

Let us learn, then, from this first instance of our Saviors preparatory prayer at His Baptism, the necessity of special supplication on our part in similar circumstances. If we are making our first public profession of faith in Him, or if we are renewing that profession. If we are moving to another sphere of service, if we are taking office in the Church as deacons or elders, if we are commencing the work of the pastorate. If we are in any way coming out more distinctly before the world as the servants of Christ, let us set apart special seasons for prayerand so seek a double portion of the Holy Spirits blessing to rest upon us!

II. The second instance of the preparatory prayers of Christ which we are to consider is OUR LORDS PRAYER PREPARATORY TO CHOOSING HIS TWELVE APOSTLES. It is recorded in Luke 6:12, 13And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [See Sermon #798, Volume 14SPECIAL PRO

TRACTED PRAYERRead/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at   
http://www.spurgeongems.org.] And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.

Our Lord was about to extend His ministry. His one tongue, His one voice might have delivered His personal message throughout Palestine, but He was desirous of having far more done than He could individually accomplish in the brief period of His public ministry upon earth. He would therefore have 12 Apostles and afterwards 70 disciples who would go forth in His name and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. He was infinitely wiser than the wisest of mere men, so why did He not at once select His 12 Apostles? The men had been with Him from the beginning and He knew their characters and their fitness for the work He was about to entrust to them, so He might have said to Himself, I will have James, John, Peter and the rest of the twelve, and send them forth to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and to exercise the miraculous powers with which I will endow them. He might have done this if He had not been the Christ of Godbut being the Anointed of the Father, He would not take such an important step as that without long continued prayer. So He went alone to His Father, told Him all that He desired to do and pleaded with Him, not in the brief fashion that we call prayer which usually lasts only a few minutesbut His pleading lasted through an entire night!

What our Lord asked for, or how He prayed, we cannot tell, for it is not revealed to us. But I think we shall not be guilty of vain or unwarranted curiosity if we use our imagination for a minute or two. In doing so, with the utmost reverence, I think I hear Christ crying to His Father whom the right men might be selected as the leaders of the Church of God upon the earth. I think I also hear Him pleading that upon these chosen men a Divine influence might rest, that they might be kept in character, honest in heart and holy in lifeand that they might also be preserved in sound Doctrine and not turn aside to error and falsehood. Then I think I hear Him praying that success might attend their preaching. That they might be guided where to go, where the blessing of God would go with them and that they might find many hearts willing to receive their testimony. And that when their personal ministry should end, they might pass on their commission to others so that as long as there should be a harvest to be reaped for the Lord, there should be laborers to reap itas long as there should be lost sinners in the world, there would also be earnest, consecrated men and women seeking to pluck the brands from the burning. I will not attempt to describe the mighty wrestling of that night of prayer when, in strong cries and tears, Christ poured out His very soul into His Fathers ear and heart! But it is clear that He would not dispatch a solitary messenger with the glad tidings of the Gospel unless He was assured that His Fathers authority and the Spirits power would accompany the servants whom He was about to send forth.

What a lesson there is in all this to us! What Infallible Guidance there is here as to how a missionary society should be conducted! Where there is one committee meeting for business, there ought to be 50 for prayer! Whenever we get a missionary society whose main business it is to pray, we shall have a society whose distinguishing characteristic will be that it is the means of saving a multitude of souls! And to you, my dear young Brothers in the College, I feel moved to say that I believe we shall have a far larger blessing than we have already had when the spirit of prayer in the College is greater than it now is, though I rejoice to know that it is very deep and fervent even now! You, Brothers, have never been lacking in prayerfulness. I thank God that I have never had occasion to complain or to grieve on that account, but still, who knows what blessing might follow a night of prayer at the beginning or at any part of the sessionor an all-night wrestling in prayer in the privacy of your own bedrooms? Then, when you go out to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath, you will find that the best preparation for preaching is much praying! I have always found that the meaning of a text can be better learned by prayer than in any other way. Of course we must consult lexicons and commentaries to see the literal meaning of the words and their relation to one anotherbut when we have done all that, we shall still find that our greatest help will come from prayer! Oh, that every Christian enterprise were commenced with prayer, continued with prayer and crowned with prayer! Then might we, also, expect to see it crowned with Gods blessing!

So once again I remind you that our Saviors example teaches us that for seasons of special service, we need not only prayers of a brief character, excellent as they are for ordinary occasions, but special protracted wrestling with God like that of Jacob at the Brook Jabbok, so that each one of us can say to the Lord, with holy determination

*With You all night I mean to stay,*

*And wrestle till the break of day.*   
When such sacred persistence in prayer as this becomes common throughout the whole Church of Christ, Satans long usurpation will be coming to an end and we shall be able to say to our Lord, as the 70 disciples did when they returned to Him with joy, Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name!

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider OUR LORDS PRAYER PREPARATORY TO HIS TRANSFIGURATION. You will find it in Luke 9:28, 29And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. You see that it was as He prayed that He was transfigured.

Now, Beloved, do you really desire to reach the highest possible attainments of the Christian life? Do you, in your inmost soul, pine and pant after the choicest joys that can be known by human beings this side of Heaven? Do you aspire to rise to full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to be transformed into His image from glory to glory? If so, the way is open to you! It is the way of prayeronly there will you find these priceless blessings! If you fail in prayer, you will assuredly never come to Tabors top! There is no hope, dear Friends, of our ever attaining to anything like a transfiguration and being covered with the Light of God so that whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, unless we are much in prayer!

I believe that we make more real advance in the Divine Life in an hour of prayer than we do in a month of hearing sermons. I do not mean that we are to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but I am sure that without the praying, the hearing is of little worth! We must pray. We must plead with God if we are to really grow spiritually. In prayer, very much of our spiritual digestion is done. When we are hearing the Word, we are very much like the cattle when they are cropping the grassbut when we follow our hearing with meditation and prayer, we do, as it were, lie down in the green pasturesand get the rich nutriment for our souls out of the Truth of God. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, would you shake off the earthliness that still clings to you? Would you get rid of your doubts and your fears? Would you overcome your worldliness? Would you master all your besetting sins? Would you glow and glisten in the brightness and Glory of the holiness of God? Then be much in prayer, as Jesus was! I am sure that it must be so and that, apart from prayer, you will make no advance in the Divine Lifebut that in waiting upon God, you shall renew your spiritual strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, you shall run and not be wearyyou shall walk and not faint!

IV. I must hasten on lest time should fail us before I have finished. And I must put together two of OUR LORDS PRAYERS PREPARATORY TO GREAT MIRACLES.

The first, which preceded His stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesaret, is recorded in Matthew 14:23-25And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. He had been pleading with His Father for His disciples and then, when their ship was tossed by the waves, and driven back by the contrary winds, He came down to them from the lofty place where He had been praying for them, making a pathway for Himself across the turbulent waters that He was about to calm. Before He walked upon those tossing billows, He had prayed to His Father. Before He stilled the storm, He had prevailed with God in prayer.

Am I to do any great work for God? Then I must first be mighty upon my knees! Is there a man here who is to be the means of covering the sky with clouds and bringing the rain of Gods blessing on the dry and barren Church which so sorely needs reviving and refreshing? Then he must be prepared for that great work as Elijah was when, on the top of Carmel, He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees, and prayed as only he could pray! We shall never see a little cloud like a mans hand, which shall afterwards cover all the sky with blackness, unless first of all we know how to cry mightily unto the Most High! But when we have done that, then shall we see what we desire. Moses would never have been able to control the children of Israel as he did if he had not first been in communion with his God in the desert, and afterwards in the mountain. So if we are to be men of power, we also must be men of prayer!

The other instance to which I want to refer, showing how our Lord prayed before working a mighty miracle, is when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. You will find the account of it in John 11:41, 42Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me. He did not cry, Lazarus, come forth, so that the people heard it, and Lazarus heard it, until first He had prayed, My Father, grant that Lazarus may rise from the dead, and had received the assurance that he would do so as soon as he was called by Christ to come forth from the grave.

But, Brothers and Sisters, do you not see that if Christ, who was so strong, needed to pray thus, what need there is for us, who are so weak, to also pray? If He, who was God as well as Man, prayed to His Father before He worked a miracle, how necessary it is for us, who are merely men, to go to the Throne of Grace and plead there with importunate fervency if we are ever to do anything for God! I fear that many of us have been feeble out here in public because we have been feeble out there on the lone mountainside where we ought to have been in fellowship with God. The way to be fitted to work what men will call wonders, is to go to the God of Wonders and implore Him to gird us with His all-sufficient strength so that we may do exploits to His praise and Glory!

V. The next prayer we are to consider is OUR LORDS PRAYER PREPARATORY TO PETERS FALL. We have the record of that in Luke 22:31, 32And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your breth

ren. [See Sermons #2620, Volume 45CHRISTS PRAYER FOR PETER; #2034, Volume 34 PETERS RESTORATION and #2035, Volume 34PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATIONRead/download all the sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

There is much that is admirable and instructive in this utterance of our Lord. Satan had not then tempted Peter, yet Christ had already pleaded for the Apostle whose peril He clearly foresaw! Some of us would have thought that we were very prompt if we had prayed for a Brother or Sister who had been tempted and who had yielded to the temptation. But our Lord prayed for Peter before he was tempted. As soon as Satan had desired to have him in his sieve, that he might sift him as wheat, our Savior knew the thought that was formed in the diabolic mindand He at once pleaded for His imperiled servant who did not even know the danger that was threatening him! Christ is always beforehand with us. Before the storm comes, He has provided the harbor of refuge. Before the disease attacks us, He has the remedy ready to cure it. His mercy outruns our misery!

What a lesson we ought to learn from this action of Christ! Whenever we see any friend in peril through temptation, let us not begin to talk about him, but let us at once pray for him! Some persons are very fond of hinting and insinuating about what is going to happen to certain people with whom they are acquainted. I pray you, beloved Friends, not to do it! Do not hint that So-and-So is likely to fall, but pray that he may not fall. Do not insinuate anything about him to others, but tell the Lord what your anxiety is concerning him.

But So-and-So has made a lot of money and he is getting very purseproud. Well, even if it is so, do not talk about him to others, but pray God to grant that he may not be allowed to become purse-proud. Do not say that he will be, but pray constantly that he may not beand do not let anyone but the Lord know that you are praying for him.

Then there is So-and-So. He is so elated with the success he has had that one can scarcely get to speak to him. Well then, Brother, pray that he may not be elated. Do not say that you are afraid he is growing proud, for that would imply what you would be if you were in his place! Your fear reveals a secret concerning your own nature, for what you judge that he would be is exactly what you would do in similar circumstances! We always measure other peoples corn with our own bushelwe do not borrow their bushel. And we can judge ourselves by our judgment of others. Let us cease these censures and judgmentsand let us pray for our Brothers and Sisters. If you fear that a minister is somewhat turning aside from the faith, or if you think that his ministry is not so profitable as it used to be, or if you see any other imperfection in him, do not go and talk about it to people in the street, for they cannot set him rightgo and tell his Master about him! Pray for him and ask the Lord to make right whatever is wrong. There is a sermon by old Matthew Wilks about our being Epistles of Christ, written not with ink, and not on tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart. And he said that ministers are the pens with which God writes on their hearts heartsand that pens need sharpening every now and thenbut even when they are sharp, they cannot write without ink! So he said that the best service that the people could render to the preacher was to pray the Lord to give them new pens and dip them in the fresh ink that they might write better than before! Do so, dear Friendsdo not blot the page with your censures and unkind remarks, but help the preacher by pleading for him even as Christ prayed for Peter!

VI. Now I must close with our LORDS PREPARATORY PRAYER JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. You will find it in Luke 23:46And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. [See Sermons #2311,

Volume 39OUR LORDS LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSSRead/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Our Lord Jesus was very specially occupied in prayer as the end of His earthly life drew near. He was about to die as His peoples Surety and Substitute. The wrath of God, which was due to them, fell upon Him! Knowing all that was to befall Him, He set His face steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem and, in due time, He endured the Cross, despising the shame. But He did not go to Gethsemane and Golgotha without prayer! Son of God as He was, He would not undergo that terrible ordeal without much supplication. You know how much there is about His praying in the later chapters of Johns Gospel. There is especially that great prayer of His for His Church in which He pleaded with amazing fervor for those whom His Father had given Him. Then there was His agonized pleading in Gethsemane when His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. We will not say much about that, but we can well imagine that the bloody sweat was the outward and visible expression of the intense agony of His soul which was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.

All that Christ did and suffered was full of prayer, so it was but fitting that His last utterance on earth should be the prayerful surrender of His spirit into the hands of His Father. He had already pleaded for His murderers, Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do. He had promised to grant the request of the penitent thief, Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom. Now nothing remained for Him to do but to say, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. His life, which had been a life of prayer, was thus closed with prayeran example well worthy of His peoples imitation!

Perhaps I am addressing someone who is conscious that a serious illness is threatening. Well then, dear Friend, prepare for it by prayer! Are you dreading a painful operation? Nothing will help you to bear it so well as pleading with God concerning it! Prayer will help you mentally as well as physicallyyou will face the ordeal with far less fear if you have laid your care before the Lord and committed yourselfbody, soul and spiritinto His hands. If you are expecting, before long, to reach the end of your mortal life either because of your advanced age, or your weak constitution, or the inroads of the deadly consumptionpray much. You need not fear to be baptized in Jordans swelling flood if you are constantly being baptized in prayer! Think of your Savior in the Garden and on the Crossand pray even as He didNot my will, but yours be done...Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.

While I have been speaking to Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, there may have been some here who are still unconvertedwho have imagined that prayer is the way to Heavenyet it is not! Prayer is a great and precious help on the road, but Christ, alone, is the Way! And the very first step heavenward is to trust ourselves wholly to Him. Faith in Christ is the all-important matter and if you truly believe in Him, you are saved! But the very first thing that a saved man does is to prayand the very last thing that he does before he gets to Heaven is to pray. Well did Montgomery write

**Prayer is the contrite sinners voice, Returning from his ways   
While angels in their songs rejoice, And cry, Behold, he prays!   
Prayer is the Christians vital breath, The Christians native air!   
His watchword at the gates of death He enters Heaven with prayer!**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: LUKE 18:1-14.**   
Verse 1. And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought   
always to pray, and not to faint. [See Sermon #2519, Volume 43WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] An

old writer says that many of Christs parables need a key to unlock them. Here, the key hangs outside the door, for at the very beginning of the parable we are told what Christ meant to teach by itthat men ought always to pray, and not to faint. And this is the parable.

2. Saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man. It is a great pity for any city and for any country where the judges do not fear Godwhere they feel that they have been put into a high office in which they may do just as they please. There were such judges in the olden times even in this landGod grant that we may not see any more like them!

3. And there was a widow in that city and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. She had no friend to plead for her. She had nobody to help her and, therefore, when she was robbed of her little patrimony, she went to the court and asked the judge for justice.

4. And he would not for a while. He preferred to be unjust. As he could do as he liked, he liked to do as he should not.   
4, 5. But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. She seems to have gone to him so often that he grew quite fatigued and pained by her persistence! The Greek words are very expressive, as though she had beaten him in the eyes and so bruised him that he could not endure it any longer. Of course, the poor woman had not done anything of the kindbut the judge thus describes her continual importunity as a wounding of him, as an attacking of him, an assault upon himfor he had, perhaps, a little conscience left. He had, at least, enough honesty to confess that he did not fear God, nor regard man. There are some of whom that is true, who will not admit it, but this judge admitted itand though he was but little troubled about ithe said, that I may not be worried to death by this womans continual coming, I will grant her request and avenge her of her adversary.   
6, 7. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him, though He

bears long with them? [See Sermon #2836, Volume 6PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He is no

unjust judge! He is One who is perfectly holy, just, true and who appears in a nearer and dearer Character than that of judge, even as the One who chose His people from eternity! Shall not God avenge His own elect? Yes, that He willonly let them persevere in prayer and cry day and night unto Him.

8. I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth? [See Sermon #1963, Volume  
33THE SEARCH FOR FAITHRead/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] If anybody can find it, He can, for He is the Creator of it! Yet, when He comes, there will be so little of it in proportion to what He deserves, and so little in proportion to the loving kindness of the Lord, that it will seem as if even He could not find italthough if there were only as much faith as a grain of mustard seed He would be the first to spy it out!

9. And He spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. It seems as if these two things went togetheras our esteem of ourselves goes up, our esteem of others goes downthe scales seem to work that way.

10. Two men went up into the Temple to pray. [See Sermon #2395, Volume 41  
THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIPRead/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It was the place that was specially dedicated for prayer. It was the place where God had promised to meet with suppliants. They did well, in those days, to go up into the Temple to pray to God. Though, in these days

*Wherever we seek Him, He is found,*

*And every place is hallowed ground.*   
It is sheer superstition which imagines that one place is better for prayer than another! So long as we can be quiet and still, let us pray wherever we may be.

10, 11. The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men areextortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. It is possible that this was all true. We have no indication that he was a hypocriteand if what he said was truethere was something in it for which he might well thank God. It was a great mercy not to be an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adultererbut what spoilt his expression of thankfulness was that back-handed blow at the other man who was praying in the same Templeor even as this publican. What had the Pharisee to do with him? He had quite enough to occupy his thoughts if he could only see himself as he really was in Gods sight!

12. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. Observe that there is no prayer in all that the Pharisee said. There was a great deal of self-righteousness and self-congratulation, but nothing else. There was certainly no prayer at all in it!

13. And the publican, standing afar offJust on the edge of the crowd, keeping as far away as he could from the Most Holy Place  
13. Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. [See Sermon #1949, Volume

33A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTHRead/download the entire sermon, free of

charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That was all prayerit was a prayer for mercy, it was a prayer in which the suppliant took his right place, for he was, as he said, a sinner. He does not describe himself as a penitent sinner, or as a praying sinner, but simply as a sinner. And as a sinner, he goes to God asking for mercy. Our English version does not give the full meaning of the publicans prayer, it is, God be propitious to me, that is, be gracious to me through the ordained Sacrifice. And that is one of the points of the prayer that made it so acceptable to God. There is a mention of the Atonement in it. There is a pleading of the sacrificial blood. It was a real prayer and an acceptable prayerwhile the Pharisees boasting was not a prayer at all.

14. I tell you, this manThis publican, sinner as he had been, though he had no broad phylacteries like the Pharisee had, though he may not have washed his hands before he came into the Temple, as, no doubt the Pharisee didthis man, who could not congratulate himself upon his own excellence, this man

14. Went down to his house justified rather than the other. He obtained both justification and the peace of mind that comes from it! God smiled upon him and set him at ease concerning his sin. The other man received no justificationhe had not sought it and he did not get it. He had a kind of spurious ease of mind when he went into the Temple and he probably carried it away with him! But he certainly was not justified in

the sight of God. [See Sermon #2687, Volume 46TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

14. For everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. God turns things upside down! If we think much of ourselves, He makes us little, and if we make little of ourselves, we shall find that a humble and contrite heart He will not despise! May He teach us so to pray that we may go down to our house justified, as the publican was!

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 #2326 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SATAN DEPARTING, ANGELS MINISTERING   
NO. 2326

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1893. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 15, 1889.

**And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season.   
Luke 4:13.**

**Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him. Matthew 4:11.**

BELOVED Friends, we have very much to learn from our Lords temptation. He was tempted in all points, like as we are. If you will study the temptation of Christ, you will not be ignorant of Satans devices. If you see how He worsted the enemy, you will learn what weapons to use against your great adversary. If you see how our Lord conquers throughout the whole battle, you will learn that, as you keep close to Him, you will be more than conqueror through Him that loved you. From our Lords temptation we learn, especially, to pray, Lead us not into temptation. Let us never mistake the meaning of that petition! We are to pray that we may not be tempted, for we are poor flesh and blood and very frail. It is for us to cry to God, Lead us not into temptation. But we also learn a great deal from the close of our Lords great threefold trial. We find Him, afterwards, peacefulministered unto by angelsand rejoicing. That should teach us to pray, But, if we must be tempted, deliver us from the evil, or, as some render it, and very correctly, too, Deliver us from the Evil One. First, we pray that we may not be tempted at all and then, as a supplement to that prayer, yielding the whole matter to Divine Wisdom, If it is necessary for our manhood, for our growth in Grace, for the verification of our Graces and for Gods Glory, that we should be tempted, Lord, deliver us from the evil, and especially deliver us from the impersonation of evil, the Evil One!

With that as an introduction, for a short time, tonight, let me call upon you to notice in our text, first, the devil leaving the tempted OneThen the devil left Him. Secondly, we shall keep to Matthews Gospel and notice the angels ministering to the tempted One after the fallen angel had left Him. And then, thirdly, the limitation of the rest which we may expectthe limitation of the time in which Satan will be gonefor Luke puts it, When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season, or, as some put it, until a fit opportunity, when he would, again, return, and our great Lord and Master would once more be tried by his wicked wiles.

I. First, we have as the subject for our happy consideration, THE DEVIL LEAVING THE TEMPTED ONE.   
When did the devil leave our Lord? When he had finished the temptation. It must have been a great relief to our Divine Master when Satan left Him. The very air must have been more pure and fit to be breathed. His soul must have felt a great relief when the evil spirit had gone awaybut he went not, we are told, until he had finished all the temptation. So Luke puts itWhen the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season. Satan will not go till he has shot the last arrow from his quiver. Such is his malice that as long as he can tempt, he will tempt. His will desires our total destruction, but his power is not equal to his will. God does not give him power such as he would like to possessthere is always a limit set to his assaults. When Satan has tempted you throughout and ended all his temptation, then he will leave you. You have not yet undergone all forms of temptation, so you may not expect absolutely and altogether to be left by the arch-enemy.   
It may be a long time, when you are suffering from his attacks, before he will hold his hand, for he will try all that he possibly can to lead you into evil and to destroy the Grace that is in you. Still, he does come to an end with his temptations sooner than he desires, for, as God has said to the mighty sea, Until this time shall you come, but no further; and here shall your proud waves be stayedand so says He to the devil. When He permitted Satan to try the Graces of Job and to prove his sincerity, He let him go just so far, but no farther. And when he asked for a further stretch of power, still there was a limit. There is always a limit to Satans power and when he reaches that point, he will be pulled up shorthe can do no more. You are never so in the hands of Satan as to be out of the hands of God. You are never so tempted, if you are a Believer, that there is not a way of escape for you! God permits you to be tried for many reasons which, perhaps, you could not altogether understand, but which His infinite wisdom understands for you. But He will not suffer the rod of the wicked to rest upon the lot of the righteous. It may fall there, but it shall not rest there. The Lord may let you be put into the fire, but the fire shall be heated no hotter than you are able to bear. When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him.   
Satan did not depart from Christ, however, until he had also failed in every temptation. When the Lord had foiled him at every pointhad met every temptation with a text of Holy Scripture and had proved His own determination to hold fast His integrity and not let it goit was not till then that the enemy departed. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if you can hold out, if you can stand against this and then, against, that. If you are protected against frowns and protected against flatteries. If you are protected against prosperity and against adversity. If you are protected against sly insinuations and open attackswhen you have won the day, as by Gods Grace you will do, even as your Master didthen the enemy will depart from you! Well, says one, I wish that he would depart from me, for I have been sorely troubled by him, to which I say most heartily, Amen.   
Let us think, for a minute or two, about when Satan will depart from the child of God, as he did from the great Son of God.   
I have no doubt that he will do that when he finds that it is necessary for him to be somewhere else. Satan is not everywhere and cannot be, for he is not Divine. He is not Omnipresent, but, as one has said, although he is not everywhere present, it would be hard to say where he is not, for he moves so swiftly, he is such an agile spirit, that he seems to be here and there and everywhere. And where he is not in person, he is represented by that vast hostthe legions of fallen spirits who are under his control. And even where they are not, he carries out his evil devices so that he leaves the leaven to work, the evil seeds to grow when he, himself, has gone elsewhere. Yet it is, probably, not many times in ones life that any man is actually called into conflict with Satan, himself, personally. There are too many of us, now, for him to give all his time and strength to onehe has to be somewhere else. Oh, I long to be the means of multiplying the number of Gods people by the preaching of the Word of God, that the Gospel of the Grace of God may fly abroad and bring in myriadsthat the devil may have more to do and, therefore, not be able to give so much of his furious attention, as he does in one direction and another, to the children of God!   
He also leaves Gods people very quickly when he sees that they are sustained by superior Grace. He hopes to catch them when Grace is at a low ebb. If he can come upon them when faith is very weak, when hopes eyes are dim, when love has grown coldthen he thinks that he will make an easy capture. But when we are filled with the Spirit as the Master was, (God grant that we may be), he looks us up and down and he presently leaves. Like an old pirate who hangs about on the lookout for merchant vessels, but if he meets with ships that have plenty of guns on board and hardy hands to give him a warm reception, he goes after some other craft not quite so well able to resist his assaults. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, be not merely Christians, only barely Christians, with just enough Grace to let you see your imperfections, but pray to God to give you mighty Grace, that you may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, so that, after the devil has tested you and found that the Lord is with you, that God dwells in you, then you may expect that, as it was with your Master, so it will be with youSatan will leave you.   
Sometimes I think, however, that Satan personally leaves us because he knows that not to be tempted is, to some men, a greater danger than to be tempted! Oh, you say, how can that be? Brothers, Sisters, do you know nothing of carnal security, of being left, as you think, to grow in Grace and to be very calm, very happy and, as you hope, very useful and to find beneath you a sea of glass with not a ripple on the wave? Yes, you say, I do know that experience and I have been thankful for it. Have you never found creeping over you, at the same time, the idea that you are somebody, that you are getting wonderfully experienced, that you are an eminent child of God, rich and increased in goods? And have you not said, like David, I shall never be moved?   
Possibly you have looked askance on some of your friends who have been trembling and timid and crying to God, from day to day, to keep them. You have been Sir Mightyyou have been Lord Great-One and everybody must bow down before you! Ah, yes, you have now fallen into a worse condition than even those are in who are tempted of Satan! A calm in the tropics is more to be dreaded than a tempest! In such a calm everything gets to be still and stagnant, the ship scarcely moves. It is like a painted ship on a painted sea and it gets to be in something like the state described by Coleridges Ancient Mariner   
*The very deep did rot   
Alas, that ever this should be!   
And slimy things with legs did crawl   
Over the slimy sea.*   
Oh, you say, that is horrible! Yes, and that is the tendency of a soul that is at peace with itself and is not emptied from vessel to vessel. I fear that is often the case with those who believe themselves to be supernaturally holy. A curious fact can be proven by abundant evidence, namely, that the boast of human perfection is closely followed by obscenity and licentiousness! The most unclean sects that have ever defaced the page of history have been founded by those who had the notion that they were beyond temptation, that they had ceased to sin and could never transgress again. Ah, says Satan, this notion does my work a great deal better than tempting a man! When I tempt him, then he stands up to resist me. He has his eyes open, he grasps his sword and puts on his helmet. He cries to God, Lord, help me! And he watches night and dayand the more tempted he isthe more he looks to God for strength. But if I leave him quite alone and he goes to sleep, well, then, he is not in the battle! And if he begins to feel quite secure, then I can steal in upon him unawares and make a speedy end of him. This is one reason why Satan leaves some men untempted. A roaring devil is better than a sleeping deviland there is no temptation much worse than that of never being tempted at all.   
Again, I doubt not that Satan leaves usno, I know that he does when the Lord says to him what He said in the wilderness, Get you hence, Satan. And He does say that when He sees one of His poor children dragged about, tortured, wounded, bleeding. He says, Get you hence, Satan. I permit you to fetch in My stray sheep; but not to worry them to death. Get you hence, Satan. The old Hell-dog knows his Master and he flies at once.   
This voice of God will come when the Lord sees that we cast ourselves wholly upon Him. In my Brothers prayer, he suggested to us, if you remember, that in casting our burden upon the Lord, we might not be able to get rid of it. The way was to cast ourselves and our burden, both, upon the Lord. The best way of all is to get rid of the burden entirely, to cast yourself, but without your burden, upon the Lord! Let me remind you of a story that I once told you, of a gentleman who, riding along in his coach, saw a packman carrying a heavy pack, and asked him if he would like a ride. Yes, and thank you, Sir. But he kept his pack on his back while riding. Oh, said the friend, why do you not take your pack off and put it down in front? Why, Sir, he said, it is so kind of you to give me a ride that I do not like to impose upon your good nature, and I thought that I would carry the pack myself! Well, said the other, but, you see, it makes no difference to me whether you carry it or do not carry itI have to carry you

and your packso you had better unstrap it and put it down in front.  
So, Friend, when you cast your burden upon God, unstrap it! Why should you bear it yourself when God is prepared to bear it? Beloved, there are times when we forget that, but when we can come and absolutely yield ourselves right up, saying, Lord, here I am, tempted, poor and weak. But I come and rest in You. I know not what to ask at Your hands, but Your servant has said, Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. I lie at your feet, my Lord. Here I am, here would I be. Do with me as seems good in Your sightonly deal in tender mercy with Your servant. Then will the Lord rebuke the enemy! The waves of the sea shall be still and there shall be a great calm.   
So much for the devil leaving the tempted One. He does so, he must do so, when God commands it.   
II. But now, secondly, let us think Of THE ANGELS MINISTERING TO THE TEMPTED ONE.   
The angels came and ministered to our Lord after Satan was gone. Notice that they did not come while our Lord was in the battle. Why not? Why, because it was necessary that He should tread the winepress alone, and because it was more glorious for Him that of the people there should be none with Him! Had there been any angels there to help Him in the duel with the adversary, they might have shared the honor of the victory, but they must stay away till the fight is over. But when the foe is gone, then the angels come. It has been noted that it does not say that the angels came very often and ministered to Jesus, as much as to make us think that they were always near, that they hovered within earshot, watching, and ready to interpose if they might. They were a bodyguard round about our Lord, even as they are, today, about His people, for, are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? But the moment that the fight was over, then the angels came and ministered to Christ. Why was that?   
I suppose, first, because, as Man, He was especially exhausted. He was hungry, we are told, and that proves exhaustion. But, besides that, the strain of forty days temptation must have been immense! Men can bear up under a strain, but when it is eased, then they fall. Elijah can do marvels. He can strike the priests of Baal and behave like a hero, but, after it is all over, Elijah fails! As Man, our Lord was subject to the sinless infirmities of our flesh, and it was necessary that angels should come and minister to Him, even as the angel did in the Garden, after the agony and bloody sweat.   
But it was also because, being Man, He was to partake of the ministry which God had allotted to man. He has appointed angels to watch over His own people and, inasmuch as Jesus is our Brother, as the children were partakers of the ministry of angels, He, Himself, also took part with the same that He might show how He took our weakness upon Him and, therefore, needed and received that succor which the Father has promised to all His children.   
Was it not, again, because He was so beloved of the angels and they were so loyal to Him? They must have been amazed when they saw Him born on earth and living here in poverty! And when they saw Him tempted of the enemy, they must have loathed the adversary. How could Satan be permitted to come so near their pure and holy Master? I think that Milton could have pictured this scene and that he would have drawn every seraph there as longing to let his sword of flame find a scabbard in the heart of the foul fiend that dared to come so near to the Prince of purity! But they must not interfere. Yet, as soon as they might, then they joyfully came and ministered to Him.   
And does it not also go to show that His was a Nature very sensitive to the angelic touch? You and I are coarse, hard-hearted   
*Myriads of spirits throng the air   
They are about us now.*   
Women are to cover their heads in worship because of the angels. There are many acts of decorum in holy worship that are to be kept up because of the angels. They are innumerable. They are sent to minister to us, but we are not aware of themoften we do not perceive them. But Jesus was all tenderness and sensitivenessand He knew that the angels were there, so it was easy for them to come and minister to Him. What they did in ministering to Him, we cannot tell. I should certainly think that they sustained His bodily Nature, for He was hungry and they readily brought food to Him. But they also sustained His mental and His spiritual Nature with words of comfort. The sight of them reminded Him of His Fathers house, reminded Him of the Glory which He had laid aside. The sight of them proved that the Father did not forget Him. He had sent the household troops of Heaven to succor and support Him. The sight of them must have made Him anticipate the day of which the poet sings   
*They brought His chariot from above,   
To bear Him to His Throne   
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried, The glorious work is done!*   
Well now, Brothers and Sisters, if we are tempted, shall we have any angels to succor us? Well, we shall certainly have the equivalent of angels! Oftentimes, after a temptation, God sends His human messengers. Many of you can tell how, when you have been hearing the Word after a bad time of temptation, the Gospel message has been wonderfully sweet to you. You have sat in your pew and said, God sent that sermon on purpose for me. Or, if you have not had a sermon, you have read the Bible and the Words have seemed to burn and glow on the page! And you have warmed your soul by their heat. Has it not been so with you often? Are not all the holy things more sweet after trial than they were before? Have you not found them so? I bear my willing witness that never does Christ seem so precious, never do the promises seem so rich and rare, never does Evangelical Doctrine cling so closely to my heart, and my heart to it, as after a time of painful trial when I have been laid aside from holy service and racked with anguish! Oh, then the angels come and minister to us, in the form of men who preach the Word, or in the form of the living page of Gods written Word!   
I have noticed, too, that God sometimes cheers His tempted people with clear sunshine after rain, by some very gracious Providences. Something happens that they could not have looked forso pleasant, so altogether helpfulthat they have had to burst into singing, though just before they had been sighing! The cage door was set wide open and Gods bird has had such a flight and sung so sweetly, as it mounted up to Heaven, that the soul seemed transformed into a holy lark in its ascending music! Have you not found the Lord very gracious to you after some severe trial, or some strong temptation? I believe that this will be the testimony of many experienced Christians.   
And, as these choice Providences come, so, I do not doubt, there also come actual angels ministering to us, though we are unaware of their presence. They can suggest holy thoughts, I doubt not, to bring us comfort. But, above the angels, far superior to angelic help, is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter! How sweetly can He close up every wound and make it even sing as it heals! He makes the bones that God had broken to rejoice and fills us with a deeper experience of delight than we have ever known before!   
Well now, I suppose that some of you here, tonight, are in this conditionthat Satan has left you and angels are ministering to you. If so, you are very happy. Bless your God for it! There is a great calm. Thank God for the calm after the storm. I hope, my Brothers and Sisters, that you are the stronger for what you have endured, and that the conflict has matured you, and prepared you for something better. Now, what did our Lord do after the devil had left Him and the angels had come to minister to Him? Did He go home and stay there and begin to sing of His delightful experiences? No, we find Him preaching directly afterwards, full of the Spirit of God. He went everywhere, proclaiming the Kingdom of God. He was found in the synagogue, or on the hillside. Just in proportion as the Spirit of God had enabled Him to overcome the enemy, we find Him going forth to spend that strength in the service of His Lord!   
O tempted one, have you a respite? Spend that respite for Him who gave it to you! Is it calm, now, after a storm? Go, now, and sow your fields with the good Seed! Have you wiped your eyes and are the salt tears gone? Go sing a Psalm, thensing unto your Well-Belovedand go down into His vineyard and take the foxes, and prune the vines, and dig about themand do necessary work for Him who has done so much for you! Listen! You have been set free! There are many under bondage to Satannot as you are, fighting against himbut his willing slaves. Oh, come, my Brothers and Sistersyour God has set you freego after them! Go after the fallen woman and the drunken man. Go, seek and find the most debauched, the most depraved. Specially look after any of your own house who have played the prodigal   
*Oh, come, let us go and find them!   
In the paths of death they roam   
At the close of the day twill be sweet to say, I have brought some lost one home!*   
And it will be right to say it, if the Lord has dealt so well with you.   
III. Now, I have to close by reminding you of the third point, which is a searching truth, namely, THE LIMITATION OF OUR REST. Satan left Christ for a season, or until a fit occasion.   
Did the devil assail our Lord again? I am not sure that he personally did, but he did so in many ways by others. I notice that, before long, he tried to entangle Him in His speech. That is a very easy thing to do with us. Somebody, tonight, can take up something that I have said, twist it from its connection, and make it sound and seem totally different from what was meant by it. You know how the Herodians, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees did this with our Lordthey tried to entangle Him in His speech. In all of that, Satan led them on. Satan also actively opposed Christs ministry and Christ opposed Satanbut Jesus won the day, for He saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven!

A more artful plan, still, was that by which the devils servants, the demons that were cast out of possessed persons, called Jesus the Son of God. He rebuked them because He did not want any testimony from them. No doubt the devil thought it a very cunning thing to praise the Savior then the Saviors friends would begin to be suspicious of Him if He was praised by the devil. This was a deep trick, but the Master made him hold his peace. You remember how He said on one occasion, Hold your peace, and come out of him? It was something like this, Down dog! Come out! Christ is never very polite with Satana few words and very strong ones are all that are necessary for this arch-prince of wickedness!   
Satan tempted our Lord through Peter. That is a plan that he has often tried with us, setting a friend of ours to do his dirty work. Peter took his Lord and rebuked Him, when He spoke about being spit upon and put to death. And then the Lord said, Get you behind Me, Satan! He could see the devil using Peters tenderness to try to take Him off from His Selfsacrifice. Oh, how often has Satan tempted us that way, entangling us in our speech, opposing us in our work, praising us out of wicked motives to try to deceive us and then setting up some friend to try to take us off from holy self-denial!   
There were also occasional heart-sinking in our Lord. Thus we read in John 12:27, Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? He seems to have been very heavy in heart at that time. But the deepest soul-sinking was when, in the Garden, His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. Satan had a hand in that sore trial, for the Lord had said, The Prince of this world comes, and He said to those who came to arrest Him, This is your hour and the power of darkness. It was a dreadful season. Our Lords ministry began and ended with a fierce onslaught from Satan. He left Him after the temptation, but only for a season.   
Well now, dear Friends, if we have peace and quietness tonight, and are not tempted, do not let us become self-secure. The devil will come to us, again, at a fit opportunity. And when will that be? There are a great many fit opportunities with you and with me. One is when we have nothing to do. You know Dr. Watts lines   
*Satan finds some mischief still,   
For idle hands to do.*   
He will come and attack us when we are alone. I mean, when we are sad and lonely, and are sitting still, and moping by ourselves.   
But Satan also finds a very fit occasion when we are in company, especially when it is very mixed companya company of persons, perhaps, who are superior to ourselves in education and in stationbut who do not fear God. We may easily be overawed and led astray by them. Satan will come then.   
I have known him frequently come and find an occasion against the children of God when we are sick and ill, the old coward! He knows that we would not mind him when we are in good health, but sometimes when we are down in the dumps through sickness and painthen it is that he begins to tempt us to despair.   
So will he do with us when we are very poor. When a man has had a great loss in business, down comes Satan and insinuates, Is this how God treats His children? Gods people are no better off than other people.   
Then, if we are getting on in the world, he turns it the other way, and he says, Does Job fear God for nothing? He gets on by his religion. You cannot please the devil and you need not want to please him! He can make a temptation for you out of anything!   
I am going to say something that will surprise you. One time of great temptation is when we are very spiritual. As to myself, I have never been in such supreme danger as when I have led some holy meeting with sacred fervor and have felt carried away with delight in God. You know that it is easy to be on the Mount of Transfiguration and then to meet Satan at the foot, as our Lord did when He came down from that hill.   
Another time of temptation is when we have already done wrong. Now he begins to slip, says Satan. I saw him trip. Now I will have him down! Oh, for speedy repentance and an earnest flight to Christ whenever there has been a grave fault, yes, and before the grave fault comes, that we may be preserved from falling!   
And Satan finds a good occasion for tempting us when we have not sinned. After we have been tempted and we have won the day and stood fast, then he comes and says, Now, that was well done on your part, you are a splendid saint! And he who thinks himself a splendid saint is next door to a shameful sinner, depend upon it! And Satan soon gets the advantage over him.   
If you are successful in business or successful in holy work, then Satan will tempt you. If you are not successful and have had a bad time, then Satan will tempt you. When you have a heavy load to carry, he will tempt you. When that load is taken off, then he will tempt you worse than ever! He will tempt you when you have obtained some blessing that you have been thinking was such a great gift, just as, in the wilderness, when they would cry for flesh and said that they must have flesh, God gave them their hearts desirebut sent leanness into their soul. Just as you have secured the thing that you are seeking, then comes a temptationto which all I have to say is thisWatch.   
What I say unto you, I say unto all, said Christ, Watch. Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation. And by the conflict and the victory of your Master, go into the conflict bravely and expect to conquer by faith in Him, even as He overcame!   
But what shall I say to those who are the slaves and the friends of Satan? The Lord have mercy upon you! If you desire to escape, there is only one way! There is the Cross and Christ hangs upon it. Look to Jesus! He can set you free. He came on purpose to proclaim liberty to the captives. Look and live! Look, now, and live, now! I implore you, do it for His dear sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:   
**LUKE 4:1-15.**

Verse 1. And Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Full of the Holy Spirit. And then, led into the wilderness to be tempted. You would not expect that. Yet it is a sadder thing to be led into a wilderness when you are not filled with the Spirit, and a sadder thing to be tempted when the Spirit of God is not resting upon you. The temptation of our Lord was not one to which He wantonly exposed Himself. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. The Spirit of God may lead us where we shall have to endure trial. If He does so, we are safe, and we shall come away conquerors even as our Master did.

2. Being forty days tempted of the devil. Six weeks of temptation! We read the story of the temptation, perhaps, in six minutes, but it lasted for nearly six weeks. Forty days tempted of the devil.

2. And in those days He did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterward was hungry. It does not appear, therefore, that Jesus was hungry while He was fasting. He was miraculously sustained during that period. After fasting, one looks for deeper spiritual feeling and more holy joy. But the most prominent fact, here, is that, He afterward was hungry, Think not that you have lost the benefit of your devout exercises when you do not at once feel it. Perhaps the very best thing that can happen to you, after much prayer, is a holy hunger. I mean not a natural hunger, as it was with our Lord, but a blessed hungering after Divine things. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

3. And the devil said unto Him, If You are the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. Satan met the hungry Man and suited the temptation to His present pangs, to His special weakness at that momentIf You are the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. The devil suspected and I think he knew that Jesus was the Son of God, but he began the temptation with an, if. He hissed into the Saviors earIf You are the Son of God. If you, Believer, can be led to doubt your sonship and to fear that you are not a son of God, Satan will have begun to win the battle. So he begins to storm the royal fort of faithIf You are the Son of God. Our Lord is the Son of God, but then He was suffering as our Substituteand in that condition He was a lone and humble Man. What if I call Him, a common soldier in the ranks? Satan invites Him to work a miracle of an improper kind on His own behalf, but Jesus worked no miracle for Himself. Now, it may be that the devil is trying some of you, tonight. You are very poor, or business is going very awkwardly, and Satan suggests that you should help yourself in an improper manner. He tells you that you can get out of your trouble very easily by some action which, although it may not be strictly right, may not be so very wrong after all. He said to Jesus, If You are the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

4. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written. That is Christs sword. Look how swiftly He drew it out of its sheath! What a sharp two-edged sword is this to be used against Satan! You also, Believer, have this powerful weapon in your handlet no man take it from you. Believe in the Inspiration of Scripture. Just now there is a fierce attack upon the Book of Deuteronomy. It is a very curious thing that all the texts Christ used during the temptation were taken out of Deuteronomy, as if that was to be the very armory out of which He would select this true Jerusalem blade with which He should overcome the tempter, It is written, It is written, It is said.

4. That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God. God can sustain Me without My turning the stone into bread. God can bring Me through my trouble without My saying or doing anything wrong. I am not dependent upon the outward and visible. If you can feel like that. If you can appropriate the promise of God and quote it to Satan, saying, It is written, using it as Christ did, you will come off conqueror in the time of temptation even as He did!

5. And the devil. Now he tries Him again. There is wave upon wave trying to wash the Son of Man off His feet.   
5. Taking Him up into an high mountain, showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. Skeptics have asked how that could be done. Well, they had better ask him who did it! He knows more about them and they know more about him than I do! But he did it. I am sure, for here it is written, that he showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.   
6. And the devil said unto Him, All this power will I give You, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto and to whomever I will I give it. Does not he talk proudly in the presence of his Lord and Master? What an audacious dog he must have been to howl, thus, in the Presence of Him who could have destroyed him by a look or a word, if He had wished to do so!   
7, 8. If You therefore, will worship me, all shall be Yours. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get you behind Me, Satan. The temptation annoyed Himit was so foreign to His holy Nature it vexed His gracious spiritso He cried out indignantly to the tempter, Get you behind Me, Satan.   
8. For it is written. Here flashed forth the sword again.   
8. You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve. Then let us pay no reverence, no worship to any but God! Consciences and minds are made for God, alonebefore Him let us bowand if all the world were offered to us for a moments idolatry, let us not fall into the snare of the tempter!   
9. And he brought Him to Jerusalem. Satan now takes Christ to holy ground. Temptations are generally more severe there.   
9. And set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple. The highest point of all. Elevated high above the earth.   
9-11. And said unto Him, If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down from here, for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over You, to keep You: and in their hands they shall bear You up, lest at any time You dash Your foot against a stone. Now Satan tries to quote Scripture, as he can do when it answers his purpose, but he never quotes it correctly. You young Brothers who go out preaching, mind that you do not imitate the devil by quoting part of a text, or quoting Scripture incorrectly! He did it, however, with a purposenot by misadventure or from forgetfulnesshe left out the very necessary words, In all Your ways. He shall give His angels charge over You, to keep You in all Your ways. Satan left out those last four words, for it was not the way of a child of God to come down from a pinnacle of the Temple headlong into the gulf beneath!   
12. And Jesus answering, said unto him, It is said, You shall not tempt the Lord your God. Do nothing presumptuously. Do nothing which would lead the Lord to act otherwise than according to His settled Laws which are always right and good.   
13, 14. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. He had not lost anything by the temptation, the power of the Spirit was still upon Him.  
14, 15. And there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. He became popular. The people resorted to Him and were glad to hear Him. He who has had secret temptation and private conflict is prepared to bear open success without being elevated by it. Have you stood foot to foot with Satan? You will think little of the applause or of the attacks of your fellow men!

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THE RULE OF GRACE   
NO. 3061

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 17, 1873.

**Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the Prophet; and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian. Luke 4:27.**

OUR Savior never sought popularity. His ministry was so attractive that thousands thronged to hear Him, glad to catch the accents of His instructive tongue, but He never for a moment sought to preach fleshpleasing truths, neither did He keep back any Doctrine by which it might be feared that His hearers would be disgusted. On this occasion He was speaking to His own townsmen. The young Man who had left the place for a while and who, during His absence, had acquired great fame as a Teacher and Miracle-Worker, had come home and there was, naturally, much curiosity to hear Him. They supposed that He would make the town where He had been brought up, to be the chief place of His benedictions. They were His fellow townsmen, so surely they had some claim upon Him! But our Lord, knowing right well that if they really understood His teaching, they would not be pleased with itand knowing that the blessings He came to bring were not such as they desiredat once dealt honestly with them and told them that Elisha did not heal the lepers in his own country, but one was healed who came from a foreign land. And He led them to infer that very likely He would do His greatest deeds of healing elsewhere than at Nazareth, that God might be pleased to bestow the richest supplies of His Grace upon heathens upon Syriansand not upon those who seemed to suppose that they had some right or claim to it. Our Lord, in fact, preached to these people the great Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, the humbling Doctrine of Divine Election of which Paul wrote to the Romans, He said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. [See Sermon #442, Volume 8GODS

WILL AND MANS WILLRead/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That was the main point of our Saviors discourse and His fellow townsmen could not endure it, as many since have not been able to endure itand seeking to end such hateful teaching by murdering the Teacher, they hurried Him from the synagogue to the top of the precipice whereon their city stood, that they might hurl Him down and destroy Him!

I learn, from this incident in our Lords life, that it is not the preachers business to seek to please his congregation. If he labors for that end, he will in all probability not attain it. But if he should succeed in gaining it, what a miserable success it would be! He must lose the favor of his Master if he should once aim at securing the favor of his fellow men. We therefore ought to preach many Truths of God which will irritate our hearers! We ought to declare to them the doctrines which are for their present and eternal welfare, however distasteful they may be to their carnal reason and natura1 inclinations. As the physician must give bitter medicine to his patients if he would cure them of their diseases, so must the preacher, who is truly sent of God, proclaim unpalatable Truths of God to his hearers and he must preach the more often upon those very bitter Truths because men are so unwilling to receive them. That part of the Gospel which they will readily embrace without any persuasion need not be preached as oftenbut that part which they will kick at and resist must be enforced again and again, if perhaps at last their judgment should be convinced of its truth and their heart won for its reception!

By the Holy Spirits help, I am going to preach to the unconverted with the earnest desire and hope that they will remain unconverted no longer. And my subject is the healing of Naaman the Syrian. There are two points in it that are especially worth noting. The first is the sovereignty of Divine Grace which was manifest in it. And the second is the unvarying rules by which that Grace works.

I. First then, let us consider THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE GRACE which was so clearly manifested in the healing of Naaman the Syrian.   
And I will observe at the outset that the experience of Naaman equally teaches the freeness of Divine Grace. If our Savior had selected this case as an instance, not of the sovereignty, but of the freeness of Divine Grace, it would have been equally appropriate. Two Truths of God which sometimes appear to be in opposition will often prove, if they are examined more closely, to be nestling side by side with one another. Suppose our Savior had put the case of Naaman thusEvery person who was a leper who applied to Elisha to be healed was healed, and though one of them came from a foreign country and was a heathen and a determined enemy of Israelhe was not rejected, for whoever came to the Prophet was accepted and received the blessing. That would have been a Truth of God and a most blessed Truth, too, and a Truth which we delight to preach and which we do preach incessantly. And that Truth does not clash with the other Truth of God of which our text speaks that out of all the lepers who were in Israel in the days of Elisha, none were cleansed save this one stranger from the alien land of Syria! The universality of Divine Grace is easily reconciled with the sovereignty of it! Perhaps we cannot reconcile it so that others can see the reconciliation, but we have felt the reconciliation in our own hearts and in our own experience. And for my part it would be as stern a difficulty to see that there is anything irreconcilable between the two Doctrines as it seems to be to others to see how the two Doctrines can possibly agree! I cannot, for the life of me, detect where they clash, just as some others cannot see how they agree. I do unfeignedly believe that Christ will in no wise cast out anyone who comes to Him and I dare to say that to every man and woman of the human racebut I also believe just as firmly that no one comes unto Christ except those whom the Father draws to Himand that all whom the Father has given to Christ shall surely come to Him.

[See Sermons #1762, Volume 30HIGH DOCTRINE AND BROAD DOCTRINE and #2386, Volume 40 THE DRAWINGS OF DIVINE LOVERead/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Both these statements are true and, therefore, both of them are to be believed and we may rest assured that they both agree with one another!

But our Savior, on this occasion, though He often preached upon the freeness of Divine Grace, was pleased to preach upon the sovereignty of it, for it was the sovereignty of Grace that saved Naaman. He was a heathen, a worshipper of the idol god, Rimmon, yet when he obeyed the Prophets command, he received the healing he asked for, yes, and more than that, he received the salvation of his soul, too! In addition to being a heathen, this man was a sworn enemy of Israel. He had often led the bands of Syria to plunder the people of God and yet, for all that, eternal mercy looked with complacency upon him and determined not only that his leprosy should be healed but that he should be a perpetual monument of the Sovereign Grace of God! He also lived far away from the abode of Elisha and in those days, the difficulty of travelling such a distance was exceedingly greatand yet, for all that, the Grace of God which passed by the lepers who were living near the Prophets home, went far afield and found this Syrian soldierand it is even so to this day! There are those who have lived ungodly, dishonest, unrighteous, unchaste lives whom God, nevertheless, saves by His Almighty Grace! There are even those who have been enemies of the Gospel, deniers and despisers of it and some who have been persecutors of Gods people who have, like Saul of Tarsus, breathed out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord and who have hated the things of God with their whole heart, yet, like Saul of Tarsus, these men have been overcome by the Omnipotence of Eternal Love and they have been saved by the Sovereign Grace of God. Some of these people have like Naaman been far off from the means of Grace. They have seldom attended the House of Prayer. They have been disregarders of Gods holy Sabbath and yet, strange to say, the first time they went to the House of God, they found the blessing! They have been sought for by Go, and found according to His Sovereign Grace. Tis wonderful, but tis true, and nobody can long be pastor of such a Church as this without observing that it is often the most unlikely persons who are saved. Those who seem to you not likely even to be influenced by Divine Truth, are the very people who yield to it! Many whom you have set down as quite incorrigible have been renewed by Sovereign Grace. Why it is so, is not for us to knowwe can only say, Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight.

This sovereignty of Grace, in the case of Naaman, seems all the more remarkable when we think of the many others who were passed over while he was healed. We would have thought surely, if Elisha can cure lepers, he will begin with those in Israel of whom our Lord tells us that there were many. But he does not begin with themwhat he does is done for Naaman the Syrian! We think, surely, if he can cure lepers, he will cure those who are observers of the Ceremonial Law, but he does no such thinghe brings healing to this heathen foreign soldier! At the present day, in every congregation, there are persons who have been brought up in an atmosphere of godliness. The first sound they ever heard was the voice of praise and prayer and they have lived in such surroundings all their livesyet they are not converted. They have been at the House of God almost as often as the doors have been openyet they are not saved. And they are respectable people, too. They are of excellent morals, very good in many ways and yet, for all thatwhile publicans and harlots, strangers and foreigners, occasional hearers and the like have actually been converted and are rejoicing in the blessings of full salvationthese people still remain in the leprosy of their natural depravity and sinimpenitent, unbelieving, unconverted, unpardoned!

How is this and why is it? It is not for us to give any reasons except the one reason that lies upon the surface, which is thisthat God will have all men know that there is no one who has any right to salvation! That we are all lost and condemned to begin with and that if He does save any of us at all, it must be upon the resting of His free, Sovereign Mercy and cannot be upon the ground of our own merits and works. Suppose that it were a rule of the Kingdom of God that all the children of pious parents should be converted? There would be many who would say, My mother was a godly woman, my father was a Christianand that is all that is required. But it is not so. You are a lost sinner whatever your mother may have been! And you must repent and be converted just as truly as if you had been the child of the worst drab of the streets. Even though you may have descended from a long line of saints, you are a sinner and must be pardoned through the Infinite Mercy of God quite as much as the child of the man who was hanged for committing murder! You must be saved on the same principles as the vilest of the vile, must be saved and, to make men see this, God often passes by the children of the godly and calls the children of the godless into the Kingdom of His Grace. If everybody who went to the House of God was entitled to the blessings of salvation, many would say, We attend such-and-such a place of worship and that is sufficient to ensure us a place in the Kingdom of Heaven! So you seat-holders would conclude that there was no need for you to be anxious and that one of these days you would be sure to get the blessing.

But, my dear Hearers, how many have gone to Hell from seats in places of worship! How many regular hearers of the Word are also regular unbelievers who will one day be banished from Gods Presence with a deeper woe upon them because they knew their duty, yet did it notthey heard the Truth of God yet did not heed it! And the Lord makes this to be known among men by often calling, by His Grace, those who attend our services, as it were, by accident and by making the Word preached to be the savor of life unto life to themwhile those who regularly hear it, yet do not receive it, prove it to be the savor of death unto death to them! And, then, if all respectable people were saved, or those only were saved who were respectable, we would have this pretty thing which is nowadays called, respectability, seeking to make God its debtor and to cause the Most High to bow down before the respectability of men!

Let a woman but turn aside from the path of virtue. Let a man be but once convicted of a crime and how our self-righteous hands are held up against them! We are so pure, so good, so free from sin that we can afford to say with the hypocrite of old, Stand by yourself, come not near me, for I am holier than you. We do not wonder that the Lord said concerning such people, These are a smoke in My nose, a fire that burns all the day. How the thrice-holy Jehovah must loathe those who hypocritically pretend to be pure when their heart is full of rottenness and uncleanness! Many a man may appear not to be leprous, but the fatal disease is upon him all the whileand only waiting for an opportunity to show itself as it will do before long! Oh how God hates the wicked cant of this self-righteous world! And therefore He comes and looks for sinners, for real sinners, for those who admit that they have gone astray from His ways like lost sheepand He leaves those who think themselves good, those who are in their own esteem, righteous. And He says to them, According to your belief, you do not need a Savior. Therefore go your way and perish in your sin. But as for those poor lost ones whom you judge to be so full of sin that there is a double necessity for them to be pardoned and saved, it is for just such sinners as these that Jesus died! He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

I have heard of a great man who was once taken to see the French galley slaves. And he had given to him the authority to set free any man whom he found at the galleys to whom he cared to give his liberty. He went to one man and found that he was committed for ten years and he asked him about his crime. He said that he thought he had been treated very unfairly. He didnt know that he had done much amiss. Perhaps he had, once or twice, taken a little that was not his, but the temptation to which he had yielded was very strong and he had done so much good in other ways that he really thought he was very harshly treated in being sent to the galleys. So the gentleman passed him byhe was too good a man to receive a free pardon. There was another who said that he was perfectly innocent. He even swore that he was as innocent as a new-born babe of every accusation that had been brought against him. The gentleman also passed him by, for he, too, was too good to be freely forgiven. Then he came to another who said that he might have tripped perhaps, but much more was made of it than was true and there were liars in court and perjury had been committed by a great many of the witnesses against him. And he knew a great many men who were twice as bad as he was, yet they were at liberty while he was there in chains. That man was not the one to be pardoned. At last the visitor came to a poor fellow who said to him, I have a long sentence to serve, but I fully deserve even more than that sentence. I wonder that I was not condemned to death, for had they proceeded to extremities, they might have proved me guilty of murder. So I look upon my sentence as much lighter than I really deserve to suffer. Then he who had received the authority to pardon whom he pleased, said, I pardon you, for, according to your own confession, you appear to be the only man in the whole place who is really receiving justice and, therefore, I will show you mercy, so you may go your way as a free man. In like manner, the Lord Jesus Christ is always ready to bestow His mercy upon those who confess that they deserve the heaviest sentence of His justice. But as long as we kick against that, we cannot expect Him to look upon us in love.

II. Now I think I have spoken sufficiently upon the Sovereignty of Grace, so I want to enlist your earnest attention to another part of the subject as I try to show you that in the case of Naaman, Sovereign Grace followed THE UNVARYING RULES OF GRACE.

God is a Sovereign and may therefore save whom He wills. And He may also save them how He wills. Yet when He is about to save a man, He does not depart from His usual method of working, but saves him according to the way in which He is accustomed to save.

Let me call your attention, first, to the fact that although Naaman was to be healed, and although Divine Sovereignty ordained the healing, it was necessary that he should first hear the good news of the possibility of healing. The ordinary way in which a sinner is saved is this, Faith comes by hearing. It is as simple as possible. We hear the message and we believe it. So Naaman must first hear about the possibility of his being healedbut how is he to hear? Where is the preacher who will wend his way to Syria and tell him about the Lords Prophet in Samaria? There is no need for any preacher to go on that long journeya little maid is taken captive and she conveys the necessary message! That is all that is required. It was through a suitable messenger that Naaman was healed and blessed, so let none of us ever get into our heads the idea that God will save His own and, therefore, there is no need for us to go out to seek them, or to preach to them when we have found them! He will not save them apart from His own waywhich way is that the preacher shall be sent and the person to be blessed shall hear the Gospeland when he hears it, he shall be constrained to believe it. Hence we who are preachers must continue to preach the Word and you who are unsaved hearers, must make a point of endeavoring to hear the Gospel message, for that is both your privilege and your duty. Gods own message to you is, Incline your ears and come unto Me. Hear and your soul shall live. Therefore give your most earnest attention to the gracious message of mercy which God sends to you by His servants!

Next, when Naaman has heard that there is healing to be had in Israel, he must give heed to the message and make a long journey in order to reach the Lords Prophet. He would not have been healed if he had sat down and said, I have heard about this possibility of being healed of my leprosy, but I shall take no trouble to see whether it is true or not. Oh, no! He does not talk like that, but he gives orders for the horses and camels to be brought out and the talents of silver, and the pieces of gold, and the changes of raiment that he will need for use as presents. And he departs for that far country where he hopes to receive the blessing that he desires. And, sinners, if you really wish to be saved, you must remember that God will save you through your attentively listening to the Gospel message that He sends to you and compelling your spirits to do what that message bids you do. God does not convert sinners while they are asleep! The Gospel is not absorbed by men as water is absorbed by a sponge, by a kind of insensible action. The Truth of God comes to the mind of the hearer and he is impressed by it. And being impressed by it, he lays it to heart and gives his whole soul to its comprehension and reception. And if you would be converted, you must get the Truth into your very soul. You must not play with it, you must not toy with it, you must not trifle with itbut you must be in earnest about the matteryou must, as the Apostle says, Lay hold on eternal life. There must be an agonizing and a wrestling that you may enter into the full appropriation and possession of the Truth of God which is proclaimed in your hearing!

When Naaman had come to the Prophet Elisha, he was not healed merely because he had heard the little maids message, or because he had heard it with such a measure of attention that he had given earnest heed to it. But it was also imperative upon him that he should obey the command he received. Go, said the Prophet, and wash in Jordan seven times. Naaman was ordained to be healed, yet he never would have been healed without the washing that Elisha commanded! And there is no sinner, be the purposes of God what they may, who will ever get his sins forgiven except by washing in the precious blood of Jesus! It matters not who you may beunless you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you cannot have eternal life! Do not suppose, dear Hearers, that there is some secret decree of God that will override thisthere is no such decree! The Truth of God with which you have to do is this, He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned. If you do not believe in Jesus, there is no hope for you! There remains, neither in God, nor in anyone else, any hope for you! The way of salvation is set before you and it is quite as simple as Elishas command to Naaman to wash seven times in Jordan. The Gospel is that Jesus Christ suffered in the place of all sinners who trust Him as their Savior, that He endured what they ought to have endured and made atonement to God for all the sins that they would ever commit. And if you thus trust Him, you are saved. The simple act of relying upon Jesus as your Substitute and Savior puts away your guilt and sin forever!

But if you say, This plan of salvation is too simple to be safe! I thought that there would be some imposing ceremony to be performed. I fancied that there would be certain mysterious feelings to be experienced! If you talk like this, you cannot be healed. It is the Eternal Purpose of God that we shall be saved through faith in Jesus Christ and if there is no faith in Jesus Christ, that is a proof that there is no Divine Purpose to heal that soul! But where there is the Divine Purpose to heal, it is evidenced, sooner or later, by a submissive yielding to the ordained way of salvation and simple trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice once more, Naaman was not healed until he was humbled. It was Gods purpose to heal him. He had been set apart by Sovereign Grace to be healed, yet he had to be humbled before the blessing could come to him. While his pride was so great, he could not be healed. Why should he wash in the Jordan? Were not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, quite as good as the Jordan? Why should he wash there? Is he not high in the esteem of his master, the king of Syria? Why should he stoop to this indignity? He will not do anything of the kind! But if he will not, be he who he may, he cannot be healed. Though he is such great man, there is no healing for him without humblingand it is so with those who would be cured of the leprosy of sin! There is no hope of Heaven for you unless you are humbled. As long as you have a rag of your righteousness that you trust in, you cannot have the robe of Christs righteousness to cover you. If you glory in what you have, and what you are, you are not the kind of man whom God delights to save! You must lie low at the feet of Jesus! You must plead for forgiveness like a poor guilty sinner! You must cry, Jesus save me, or I die! or else through the gate of Heaven you are too big to pass for, strait is the gate and narrow is the way, and no self-righteousness can go in there.

But, says one, I have always been a regular attendant at a place of worship. I have always paid twenty shillings in the pound. I give a guinea to the hospital and I believe myself to be, on the whole, a most excellent person. I do not suppose that anybody will say just that, but I mean that great many will think it. And I want all such people to plainly understand that until they get all this horrible boasting out of their soul, they will no more go to Heaven than the devil himself will! But if any man here confesses that he is a mass of iniquitythat even his best works have something bad in them, that his praying has to be wept over and his tears of repentance have to be washed to get the filth out of themif there is a sinner here, real black or scarlet sinner, he or she is the one who is freely invited to come and put his trust in Jesus, for it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief! Pride must come down, self-righteousness must die and the sinner must glorify the Grace of God by admitting that he has no merit of his ownor he cannot be saved.

What shall we say, then, to these things? Just this. Let us all go together to the Throne of God where we have offended and let us confess that none of us have any claims upon Him. Let each of us say to Him, My Lord, if You should destroy me, I must confess that I deserve it. If You should save my brother, who is equally guilty, and not save me, I dare not complain, for You have the right to exercise Your mercy wherever and however You will. I shall receive the sentence that is just even if I am banished from Your Presence forever. Submit to the Lord as the burgesses of Calais came to the conquering king with ropes about their necks! That is the proper costume for a sinner to wear before God. Say, Lord, I deserve, to die. I deserve to perish. I deserve to be destroyed. I will have no quibbles with You about my sentence, for how can a worm dispute with the Almighty? Who am I that I should reply against my Maker?

When you have taken that position, rely upon the freeness of Divine Grace. Grasp, as with a death-clutch, this great fact and say, Lord, You forgive sinners for Your own names sake. You cannot find anything in us that is good, anything that can move You to pity. But oh, by Your mercy and Your love, let men see what a gracious God You are! For Your great names sake, have mercy upon us and save us! And you can plead that Jesus said, Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. And that He has bid His servants say, Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 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. Plead with Him that He has said, 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. Go and plead in that way, and trust yourself upon the Truth revealed in the Word of God. Try it and prove it, and see whether God really means what He says. Say to Him

*You have promised to forgive   
All who in Your Son believe.   
Lord, I know You cannot lie   
Give me Christ, or else I die!*

I will not say to youGo and risk it, for there is no risk. I will not say to youGo and venture, for it is no venture. Go and say to the Lord, O Lord, if I must perish, I will perish trusting in Your mercy through the precious blood of Jesus, Your dear Son! Other refuge have I none. I cast aside all my former confidences and all my boasting and come as the worst sinner must come, for I feel that in some respects I am the worst sinner who ever came to You. I come as an utterly lost, undone, bankrupt sinner and I look to the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus for all that, I need. Then if you perish like that, I am quite willing to perish with you! And I will stand at the bar of God with you on the same terms, for if you are lost, I must be lost too! I solemnly avow that I have no hope in anything I have ever done. I have preached the Gospel these many years, but I have not preached one sermon that I can look upon with any confidence so far as to depend upon it as a merit in the sight of God! After we are saved, we may do something in the way of almsgiving and other things to show our gratitude to God, but they are worse than useless if we begin to boast of them as a reason for our salvation. My song is

*I the chief of sinners am,*

*But Jesus died for me.*   
I know He did and I hope many of you can say the same thing. We are in the same boat and if we go down, God will have to go down, too, for it would stain His honor for anyone to be lost trusting in Jesus. But we shall never go down if we are trusting in Him! We shall stand when the great floods are out and the heavens are pouring forth their deluge of devouring rain! We shall stand, for we are built upon a rock if we are trusting in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ! God grant that we may all be found there and His shall be the praise forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 107:23-82.**

Verses 23, 24. They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep. The Jews were never given to navigation. To go down to the sea in ships, seemed a very extraordinary thing to them. They looked upon it as a going down, as it were, into a dreadful abyss. We who are more accustomed to going to sea than they were, talk of the high seas, but they spoke of going down to the sea. They never went to sea except on business. King Solomon had no pleasure yacht. There was never one of that ancient race who cared to trust himself upon the sea except as a matter of sheer necessityand those who did so were looked upon with wonder by their land-loving friends. They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lordthat is, His greatest works, both in the sea and on it. They know what storms are and they see what Omnipotence can doand they come back to tell of the wonders of God upon the mighty deep. This verse may be read spiritually as well as literally. God calls some of His servants, as it were, to go down to the sea in ships. They are tried with poverty, with personal sickness, with temptation, with inward conflicts, with fierce persecutions. And God never calls them to these trials out of mere caprice, there is always a reason for it. They go down to the sea in ships to do business in great waters. There is something to be gained from their trials and something to be learned from them. They do business in great waters and these see the works of the Lord. Others hear about them and believe what they are told concerning them. But these see them. They see what God has done in their casehow He sustains, how He delivers, how He sanctifies trials and overrules them for His own Glory and His peoples good. These see the works of the Lord. And they also see the wonders of the economy of Grace. They are made to experience the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of that love which passes knowledge. They see His wonders in the deep. You and I need not desire to have trouble, as though we put out to sea for our own pleasure, but if God calls us to sail upon a sea of troubles, if He sends us there upon His business, we may depend upon it that He means that business to end to our profit and His Glory.

25-27. For He commands, and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves. They mount up to the heavens. They go down again to the depths. Their sou1 is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits end. Here we learn something of what sailors see and of what tried Christians experience. These great storms arise by Gods commandnot as many say, nowadays, by the laws of nature. The wind, which had been quiet, heard Gods voice and raises itself up, like a wild beast from its lairHe commands, and raises the stormy wind. And no sooner does the great wind begin to blow than the white crests of the waves are seen, and the white horses fly before the blast which lifts up the waves on high. Then the ship, however staunch it is, seems to have no greater power of resistance than a frail sea bird. And it is tossed up and down, up and down, from the trough of the sea to the billows crownThey mount up to the Heaven, they go down again to the depths. And their very soul begins to melt. Brave men as they are, it only needs a sufficient amount of storm to make their hearts turn to water and their spirits dissolve into the turbulent element that is all round them! Their soul is melted because of trouble. Then they cannot keep their balancethey reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man. What is worse, they cannot control their thoughtsthey are at their wits end. What can they do in such a case as that? There is an end to all human wit and wisdom when the great storms are out upon the sea. You who have ever had deep spiritual trials know the analogy of all this. There may come timesthere have come times to some of uswhen, at the command of God, or by Divine Permission, there has been a fierce blast of temptation or a fiery trialand then all that was peaceful around us before, suddenly turns into a whirlpool of tempestuous billows and we are tossed to and fro at the mercy of the winds and the waves. Sometimes we ascend in presumption and then we go down into the very depths of despair. At one moment we are joyous with hope and a moment later we seem ready to give up all hopeour courage fails us and our soul dissolves within us. If you have never known this experience, I pray that you never may know it, but some of us have had stormy times when we have seemed to have no foothold, when we have reeled to and fro like drunken menwhen the best faith we have had has been little better than staggering! Still, it is better to stagger on the promise than to stagger at itand we did still stand though we staggered and we were at our wits end. We could not see what to do, we could not tell what to do and we could not have done it if we had known what to do! We were brought to such an extremity that we seemed to have neither wit nor wisdom left.

28. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. This shows that although they were at their wits end, they had wit enough or wisdom enough to pray! Their souls were melted, so they let them run out in prayer. It is a good thing to get the soul melted, for then it will flow out like water before the Lord. Note that these sailors cried to God when there was no one else to whom they could cryThen they cry unto the Lord in their trouble. Learn from this sentence that when your soul is melted because of trouble, you can still pray. When you reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, you can still prayand when you are at your wits endyou can still pray! Prayer is never out of season! It is a fruit of Grace that is acceptable to God in autumn and in winter, in spring and in summer. As long as you live and even when the worst comes to the worst, cry mightily unto God, for He will surely hear you. Was it not so with us when we were in spiritual trouble and could do nothing else but cry unto the Lord? It was a poor prayer that we offered, but it was a real prayer that we presented when we cried unto God. Mark how quick God is to hear such prayer as this Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. He brought them into them and, therefore, He brought them out of them. It was God who took Jacob into Egypt and, therefore, though it took 400 years to bring Israel out of Egypt, God brought them out at last. He kills and He makes alive. He wounds and He heals. Rest in this Truth of God as a matter of absolute certainty!

29. He makes the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. At the first, God made everything out of nothing, so He can easily make a calm out of a storm. And He can make the storm a calm for you whenever He pleases to do so. Your troubled feelings, your tossing to and fro may soon subside into the peace of God, which passes all understanding, which shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

30. Then are they glad because they are quiet; so He brings them unto their desired haven. And there is no music that is sweeter to the mariners ears than the rattle of the chain as the anchor grips the bottom of the harbor and the ship rests from all her tossing. The Lord will give you Grace, my Brother, my Sister, to let down your anchoror, rather, to throw it up into that within the veil, for that is the way that your anchor goesand then you shall be glad because you will be quiet. I believe that there is often a greater, fuller, deeper joy in being quiet than there is in making a noise. There are times when it is good to praise the Lord with the high-sounding cymbals and with the harp of a solemn sound. But, in the deepest joy of all, we are still before God and praise is silent before God in Zion.

31. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Should they not do so? Those who have survived the storms at sea, or the still greater storms within their own souls should surely take care to praise the Lord. If we know how to pray, we also ought to know how to praise. Prayer and praise ought to form the two covers of the book of our lifeand our life is not well bound unless these are the two covers to itwith a good stiff back of faith to bind the two covers firmly together and to hold every leaf in its proper place.

32. Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders. Let them not only praise the Lord in private, but let them also sound out their song of gratitude to God where the graybeards are gathered together! And let the men of experience, the officers of the Church, the leaders of the Lords people, help them in the expression of their gratitude.

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 #753 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

NAZARETHOR, JESUS REJECTED BY HIS FRIENDS

NO. 753

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, JUNE 2, 1867, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust   
Him out of the city. And they led Him unto the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them He went His way.   
Luke 4:28-30.**

JESUS had spent several years in retirement in the house of His reputed father at Nazareth. He must have been well knownthe excellency of His Character and conduct must have attracted notice. In due time He left Nazareth, was baptized by John in Jordan, and began at once His work of preaching and working wonders. The inhabitants of Nazareth, no doubt, often said to one another, He will be sure to come home and see His parents. When He comes we will all go to hear what the carpenters son has to say.

There is always an interest in hearing one of the lads of the village when he becomes a preacher, and this interest was heightened by the hope of seeing wonders such as Jesus had worked at Capernaum. Curiosity was excitedeverybody hoped and trusted that He would make Nazareth famous among the cities of the tribes. Perhaps He would settle down there and attract a crowd of customers to their shops by becoming the great Physician of Nazareth, the great Wonderworker of the district.

By-and-by, when it so pleased Him, the famous Prophet came to His own city, and, when the Sunday drew near, the interest grew very intense as men asked the question, What do you think, will He be at the synagogue tomorrow? If He shall be there, He must, by some means, be induced to speak. The ruler of the synagogue, sharing in the common opinion, at the proper point of the service, when he saw Jesus present, took up the roll of the Prophet and passed it to Him, that He might read a passage, and then speak according to His own mind upon it.

All eyes were opened. No sleepy people were in the synagogue that morning when He took the roll, unfolded it like one who was well accustomed to the Book, opened it at a passage most pertinent and applicable to Himself, read it, standing, thus paying respect to the Word by His posture. And then, when He had folded up the Book, He took His seatnot because He had nothing to saybut because it was the good practice in those days for the preacher to sit down and the hearers to stand. A method much to be preferred to the present one in some respects, at any rate, when the preacher is lame, or the hearers drowsy.

The passage which Jesus read to them, I have said, was very suitable and applicable to Himself. But the most remarkable point, perhaps, was not so much what He read as what He did not read, for He paused, almost, in the middle of a sentence: To proclaim, said He, the year of the Lord, and there He stopped. The passage is not complete unless you read the next words, and the day of vengeance of our God. Our Lord wisely ceased reading at those words, probably wishing that the first sermon He should deliver should be altogether gentle, and have in it not so much as a word of threatening.

His hearts desire and prayer for them was that they might be saved, and that instead of a day of vengeance it might be to them the acceptable year of the Lord. So he folded the Book, sat down, and then began His exposition by opening up His own commission, He explained who the blind were, who the captives were, who the sick and wounded and bruised were, and after what sort the Grace of God had provided liberty and healing and salvation.

They were all wonder struck! They had never heard anyone speak so fluently and with so much forceso simply, and yet so nobly. All eyes were fastened and everybody was astonished at the Speakers style and matter. Soon a buzz went round the synagogue, for each man said to his fellow, Is not this the carpenters son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? From where, then, has this Man all these things?

They were astonished and envious, too. Then the Speaker, feeling that it was not the object of His ministry to astonish people but to impress their hearts, changed His subject, and charged with tremendous vigor upon their consciences. For if men will only give the minister their wonder, they have given him nothing! We desire you to be convicted, and converted, and short of this, we fail. Jesus turned from a subject glowing with interest, fruitful with every blessingseeing that to them it was no more than pearls to swineand He spoke to them personally, pointedly, somewhat cuttingly, as they thought. You will surely say unto Me this proverb, Physician, heal Yourself: whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.

And then He plainly told them that He did not recognize their claims, that albeit He might have been bred in that district, and have lived with them, yet He did not recognize from that reason any obligation to display His power to suit their pleasure. And He gave an instance in pointHe showed that Elijah, when God, the Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widowwould bless a widow was not sent to bless a widow of Israel, but a Gentile woman, a Syrophenician, one of the accursed Canaanites!

To none of the widows of Israel was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. Then, again, He mentioned that Elisha, the servant of Elijah, when he had healing to give to lepers, did not heal an Israelite leperhe healed not even those lepers who came with the good news that the Syrian host had fled. But he healed a stranger from a far country, even Naaman.

Thus the Savior set forth the doctrine of Sovereign Grace! Thus He declared Himself to be free to do as He would with His own. And this, with other circumstances connected with the sermon, so excited the anger of the entire congregation that those eyes which had looked upon Him with wonder, at first, now began to glare like the eyes of beasts! And those tongues which were ready to have given Him applause began to howl forth indignation!

They rose up at once to slay the Preacher! The curiosity of yesterday was turned into the indignation of today, and whereas, a few hours ago they would have welcomed the Prophet to His own country, they would now think, Crucify Him! Crucify Him! is too good for Him. They drag Him out of the synagoguebreaking up their own worship, forgetful of the holiness of the day to which they paid such wonderful respectand they compelled Him forth to cast Him, as malefactors sometimes were from lofty rocks, from the brow of the hill on which their city was built.

He evaded them and escaped, but what a singular termination to such a beginning! Why, you and I would have said, What a fruitful field have we here! The best of Preachers! And one of the most desirable of audiencesa people all attentive, every ear open, almost every mouth open, so wonderstruck are they with Himwith His mode of address and with what He has to say! There will be innumerable conversion here! Nazareth will become the stronghold of Christianity! It will be the very metropolis of the new faith!

But no such thingsuch is the perversity of human naturethat where we expect much, we get but little. And the field which should have brought forth wheat a hundred-fold, yields nothing but thorns and thistles. My design is, as God may help me, to make an application of this narrative to the hearts and consciences of some now presentsome who are doing with the Savior somewhat in the same manner as these men of Nazareth did with Him in the days of His flesh. We shall consider, first of all, who were these rejecters of Christ. Secondly, why this rejection. And thirdly, what came of it.

I. First, then, WHO WERE THESE REJECTORS OF CHRIST? I ask the question because I am persuaded that they have their types and representatives here at the present moment. They were, dear Friends, first of all, those who were nearest related to the Savior. They were the people of His own town. Ordinarily, you would expect fellow townsmen to show a man the most kindness. He was come unto His own, and though His own received Him not, this was a subject of wonder that they should not do so!

Now, there are some in this house this morning who are not Christians. They are not with Christ and consequently they are against Him. But still they are the nearest related to Christ of any unconverted people in the world because from their childhood they have attended religious worship. They have joined in the songs, and prayers, and services of the Lords House.

Moreover, they are fully persuaded of the authenticity and Divinity of the Word of God, and they have no doubt but what the Savior was sent from God and that He can save, and is the appointed Savior. They are not troubled with doubts. Skeptical thoughts do not perplex them. They are, in fact, Agrippas, almost persuaded to be Christians. They are

not Christians, but they are the nearest related to Christians of any people living upon the face of the earth.

You would naturally expect that they would be the best people to preach to, but they have not proved to be so. They have not proved to be so in my case, for some such attending here are less likely to be brought to a decision than those who are afar off. You know to whom I refer, for some of you, as you look me in the face, might well think, Master, in saying so, you rebuke us, also.

These people of Nazareth, again, were those who knew most about Christ. They were well-acquainted with His mother and the rest of His relatives. They knew His whole pedigree. They could tell at once that Joseph and Mary were of the tribe of Judah. They probably could tell why they came from Bethlehem and how it was that they once sojourned for awhile in Egypt. The whole story of the wondrous Child was known to them.

Now, surely these people, not needing to be taught the rudiments, not requiring to be instructed in the very elements of the faith, must have been a very hopeful people for Jesus to preach to! But alas, they did not prove to be so! I have many here who are wonderfully like they. You know the whole story of the Savior and have known it ever since your childhood. More than that, the doctrines of the Gospel are theoretically well understood by you. You can discuss Gospel Truths, and you delight to do so, for you take a deep interest in them.

When you read the Scripture it is not to you a dark, mysterious volume, which you cannot at all comprehendyou are able to teach others what are the first principles of the Truth of God. And yet, for all that, how strangely sad it is that, knowing so much, you should practice so little! I am afraid that some of you know the Gospel so well that for this very reason it has lost much of its power with you, for it is as well known as a thrice-told tale.

If you heard it for the first time, its very novelty would strike you, but such interest you cannot now feel. It is said of Whitfields preaching that one reason of its great success was that he preached the Gospel to people who had never heard it before. The Gospel was, to the masses of England in Whitfields day, very much a new thing. The Gospel had been either expunged from the Church of England and from Dissenters pulpits, or where it remained it was with the few within the Church and was unknown to the masses outside.

The simple Gospel of believe and live, was so great a novelty, that when Whitfield stood up in the fields to preach to his tens of thousands, they heard the Gospel as if it were a new revelation fresh from the skies! But some of you have become Gospel-hardened. It would be impossible to put it into a new shape for your ears. The angles, the corners of the Truth of God, have become worn off to you. Sundays follow Sundays, and you come up to this Tabernacleyou have been here long. You take your seats and go through the service and it has as much become routine with you as your getting up and dressing yourselves in the morning.

The Lord knows I dread the influence of routine upon myself. I fear lest it should get to be a mere form with me to deal with your souls, and I pray God He may deliver you and me from the deadly effect of religious routine. It were better if some of you would change your place of worship rather than sleep in the old one. Go and hear somebody else if you have heard me long and obtained no blessing. Rather than get in those pews and perish under the Word, lulled by the Gospel which is meant to arouse you, go elsewhere, and let some other voice speak to your ears, and let some other preacher see what God may do by him. O may the Spirit of God but save you, and it shall be equal joy to me whether you be saved under someone else, or under my own word. Yet here is the matterit is sad, indeed, that men so nearly related to Christianity, who know so much about Christ should yet reject the Redeemer.

Again, these were people who supposed that they had a claim upon Christ. They did not feel that it would be a great kindness on the part of the Lord Jesus to heal their sick. They no doubt argued, He is a Nazareth man, and of course He is, in duty, bound to help Nazareth. They considered themselves as being, in a sort, His proprietors who could command Him to help them.

I have sometimes feared that you who are children of godly parents, or seat-holders, or subscribers to various religious objects, in your hearts imagine that if any are to be saved, surely it must be yourselves! Yet your claim has no basis to rest upon! I would to God that you were not only almost, but altogether saved, every one of you. But perhaps the very fact that you think you have a claim upon Divine Grace may be the stone which lies in your path, because you think, Surely Jesus Christ will cast an eye of favor upon us, even if others perish!

I tell you He will do as He wills with His own and publicans and harlots will enter into the kingdom of Heaven before some of you if you think that you have any right to mercy! For the mercy of God is Gods sovereign gift and He will have you know it to be so. He has said itsaid it as with a voice of thunder, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. If you kick against His sovereignty, you shall stumble at a stone upon which you shall be broken.

Oh, but if you can feel you have no claim upon God! If you can put yourself into the position of the publican who dared not lift up so much as his eyes towards Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner, you are in a position in which God can bless you consistently with the dignity of His own sovereignty! O take up the position which Grace accepts! Beggars, and such you must be, must not be choosers. He who asks for Grace must not set himself up to dictate to his God. He who would be saved, though he is unworthy, must come to God upon the footing of a suppliant and humbly plead, that for mercys sake, the Lords love would be manifested towards him.

I fear that there may be a spice of this kind of spirit in the minds of some of you, and if so, you are the people who have rejected Christ. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! We call the skies and the round earth to witness! Here are those that are near to being Christians. They know the Gospel by the letter of it, and they think they have a claim upon the Savior, and yet they remain disobedient to the Divine command, Believe and live. They turn upon their heels and reject the Savior, and will not come unto Him that they might have life! Hear it, I say, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth!

II. Secondly, we are to explain the reasons WHY THEY THUS REJECT THE MESSIAH. The reasons will be applicable to some of you, you unconverted people, who are sitting here! Sometimes the Spirit of God comes with a melting power over an audience and makes men feel the Truth which is meant for them. Pray, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that such may be the case nowthat our unconverted friends who give us so much concern because of their enmity to Jesusmay be impressed with the remonstrances now addressed to them.

Why did they reject Christ? I think they did so under a very complex feeling not to be accounted for by one circumstance. Several things went to make up their wrath and enmity. The fire of their anger fed upon several kinds of fuel. In the first place, I should not wonder but what the groundwork of their dissatisfaction was laid in the fact that they did not feel themselves to be the persons to whom the Savior claimed to have a commission.

Observe He said, in the 18th verse, that He was, anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor. Now, the poorest ones in the synagogue may have felt pleased at that. But as it was almost a maxim with the Jewish doctors that it did not matter what became of the poorfor few but the rich could enter Heaventhe very announcement of a Gospel for the poor must have sounded to them awfully democratic and extremeand must have laid in their minds the foundation of a prejudice. He meant, of course, the poor in spirit, whether they are poor in pocket or not, for those are the poor whom Jesus comes to bless.

But the use of expressions so contrary to all that they had been accustomed to hear made them bite their lips while they said within themselves, We are not poor in spirit, but have not we kept the Law? Did not some of them say, We have worn our phylacteries and made broad the borders of our garments. We have not eaten except with washed hands. We have strained out all gnats from our wine. We have kept the fasts, and the feasts, and we have made long prayerswhy should we feel any poverty of spirit?

Therefore they felt there was nothing in Christs mission for them. When He next mentioned the broken-hearted, they were not at all conscious of any need of a broken heart. They felt heart-whole, self-satisfied, perfectly content. What is the use of a preacher? Who is to preach to the broken-hearted when all his hearers feel that they have no cause to rend their hearts with repentance? Then when He spoke of captives, they claimed to have been born free and not to have been in bondage to any man. They rejected with scorn the very idea that they needed any liberator, for they were as free as free could be.

When Jesus further spoke of the blindBlind! they said, does He insult us? We are far-seeing men! Let Him go and preach to some of the outcasts who have become blind, but as for us, we can see into the very depths of all mysteries. We need no instruction and opening of eyes from Him. When at last He spoke of those who had been bruised, as though they had been beaten with stripes for their sinsWe have no sins, they said, for which we should be bruised. We have been honorable, upright people, and never have been chastened by the scourge of the Law. We need no liberty for them that are bruised. What is the acceptable year of the Lord to us, if it is only for bruised captive ones? We are not such.

At a glance you perceive, my Brethren, the reason why in these days Jesus Christ is rejected by so many Church-going and Chapel-going people. Here you see the reason why so many of your respectable attendants at our places of worship reject salvation by Graceit is because they do not feel that they need a Savior. They think that they are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing! But they know not that they are naked, and poor, and miserable. They claim to be intelligent, thoughtful, and enlightened. They do not know that until a man sees Christ, he walks in darkness and is stone blind, and beholds no light. They are not bruised, they say. Would to God they were! God, perhaps, has left them because it was of no use to bruise themand why should they be struck any more?

They only revolt more and more because they feel no smarts of conscience, no terrors of Gods Law. Therefore Jesus Christ is a root out of a dry ground to them. They despise Him, as the healthy man laughs at the physician, and as the man that is rich cares not for the alms of the benevolent. Ah, but my dear Friends, let me remind you that if you do not feel your need of a Savior, the need exists for all that! You were born in sin and shaped in iniquity, and no baptismal waters can wash away your defilement. Beside this, you have sinned from your youth up in heart, and word, and thoughtand you are condemned already because you have not believed on the Son of God!

Although you may not have been openly wicked, yet there is a text which I must bring to your remembranceThe wicked shall be turned into Hell with all the nations that forget God. That last list includes you, my Heareryou who forget, and postpone, and trifleyou who wait for a more convenient season. It includes you who live with the Gospel before you and yet do not comply with its commands, but say to your sins, I love you too well to repent of you, and to your self-righteousness, I am too fond of this foundation to leave it to build upon the foundation which God has laid in the Person of His dear Son.

Ah, my dear Hearers, it is the self-conceit which makes the empty bag think itself full and which makes the hungry man dream that he has feasted and is satisfied. It is self-righteousness which damns the souls of thousands! There is nothing so ruinous as this presumptuous selfconfidence. I pray the Lord may make you feel yourself to be undone, ruined, lost, cast away, and then there is no fear of your rejecting Christ, for he that is perfectly bankrupt is willing to accept a Savior! He that has nothing of his own falls flat before the Cross and takes gladly the all things which are stored up in the Lord Jesus! This is the first and perhaps the greatest reason why men reject the Savior.

But, secondly, I entertain little doubt but what the men of Nazareth were angry with Christ because of His exceedingly high claims. He said, The Spirit of Jehovah is upon Me. They started at that. Yet they might be willing to admit that He was a Prophet, and so, if He meant it in that sense, they would be patient. But when He said, The Lord has anointed Me to preach, and so on, claiming to be no other than the promised Messiah, they shook their heads and murmuringly said, He claims too much.

When He placed Himself side by side with Elijah and Elisha, and claimed to have the same rights and the same spirit as those famous onesand by inference compared His hearers to the worshippers of Baal in Elijahs daythen they felt as if He set Himself up too high, and put them down too low. And here, again, I see another master reason why so many of you good people, as you would be thought to be, reject my Lord and Master.

He sets Himself too high. He asks too much of you. He puts you down too low. He tells you, you must be nothingand He must be everything. He tells you that you must give up that idol god of yours, the world, and the pleasures of it, and that He must be your Master, and not your own wills. He tells you that you must pluck out the right eye of pleasure if it comes in the way of holiness, and rend off the right arm of profit rather than commit sin. He tells you that you must take up your cross and follow Him outside the campleaving the worlds religion and the worlds irreligion.

He tells you you must no longer be conformed to the world, but become, in a sacred sense, a Nonconformist to all its vanities and maxims, customs and sins! He tells you that He must be the Prince Imperial in your souls and that you must be His willing servants and His loving disciples. These are claims too high for human nature to yield to them! And yet, dear Hearer, remember that if you do not yield to them, a much worse thing awaits you!

Kiss the Son, kiss His scepter now, I say! Now, bow down and acknowledge Him, for if not, beware lest He be angry, and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little. Those who kiss not the scepter of silver shall be broken with the rod of iron! They who will not have Christ to reign over them in love shall have Him to rule over them in terror in the day when He puts on the garments of vengeance and dyes His vesture in the blood of His foes!

O acknowledge Him as He is covered with His own blood lest you have to acknowledge Him when He is covered with yours! Accept Him while you may, for you will not be able to escape from Him when those eyes, which are like eyes of fire, shall flash devouring flame upon His adversaries! Alas, this is a fruitful source of mischief to the sons of men! They cannot give King Jesus His due, but would gladly thrust the Lord of Glory into a corner. Oh, base hearts to kick against so dear, so great, so good a King!

Thirdly, another reason might be found in the fact that they were not for receiving Christ until He had exhibited some great wonder. They craved for miracles. Their minds were in a sickly state. The Gospel, which they did need, they would not have! The miracles which He did not choose to give, they eagerly demanded. Oh, how many there are nowadays who must see signs and wonders, or else they will not believe! I know you, young woman, you have set this in your heart before you, I must feel as John Bunyan feltthe same horror of conscience, the same gloom of soulor else I will never believe in Jesus.

But what if you never should feel it, as probably you never may? Will you go to Hell out of spite with God, because He will not do for you just what He did for another? A young man yonder has said to himself, If I had a dream, as I hear So-and-So had, or if there should happen to me some very remarkable event in Providence which should just meet my taste! Or if I could feel today some sudden shock of, I know not what, then I would believe. Thus you dream that my Lord and Master is to be dictated to by you! You are beggars at His gate, asking for mercy, and you must draw up rules and regulations as to how He shall give that mercy!

Do you think that He will ever submit to this? My Master is of a generous spirit, but He has a right royal heart and He spurns all dictation and maintains His sovereignty of action. But why, dear Hearer, do you crave for signs and wonders? Is it not enough of a wonder that Jesus bids you trust Him and promises that you shall be saved at once? Is not this enough of a sign that God has proposed so wise a Gospel as that of, Believe, and live? Is not this enoughis not the Gospel its own sign, its own wonder, and its own proof, because he that believes has everlasting life? Is not this a miracle of miracles, that, God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish?

Surely that precious word, Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely, and that solemn promise, Him that comes unto Me, I will in nowise cast out, are better than signs and wonders! A truthful Savior ought to be believed. He never did lie. Why will you ask proof of the veracity of One who cannot lie? The devils themselves declared him to be the Son of Godand will you stand out against Him? Sovereign, mighty, Irresistible Grace, come and conquer this wickedness in the hearts of men and make them willing to trust Jesus, whether they see signs and wonders or not!

Again, and perhaps this time I may hit the head of the nail in some cases, though I suppose not in many in this placepart of the irritation which existed in the minds of the men of Nazareth was caused by the peculiar doctrine which the Savior preached upon the subject of Election. I question whether that was not at bottom the real sting of the whole matter. He laid it down that God had a right to dispense His favors just as He pleased and that in doing so He often selected the most unlikely objects. For instance, a widow in idolatrous Sidon had her needs supplied in famine, while the widows of Israel were left without meal.

At another time under Elisha, when God would heal a leper, He left the Israelite lepers to die, but a leper who came from the idolatrous land of Assyria, and who had been accustomed to bow in the house of Rimmon received healing! Now they did not like this. And I suppose even in this congregation, though you are pretty well accustomed to strong statements upon the Sovereignty of God, and we are not ashamed to preach Predestination and Election as clearly as we preach any doctrineyet there are some who are mightily uneasy when the doctrine is preached and feel as if they could almost slay the preacher because the doctrine is so offensive to human nature!

Everywhere you will notice that the church of Rome has not half the hatred to Lutheranism that it has to Calvinism. It is the Doctrine of Grace, which is the soul of Calvinism, that is the poison of Popery! Rome cannot endure the Truth that God will save where He willsthat He has not given salvation into the hands of priests, nor given it to our own merit or our own will to save us. God holds the keys of the treasury of Divine Grace and distributes as He pleases. This is the doctrine which makes men so angry that they know not what to say of it!

But, my dear Hearer, I trust this is not the reason why you refuse to believe in Jesus, for if it is, it is a most foolish reason! For while this is true, there is yet another Truth that, Whoever believes in Jesus Christ, shall not perish. While it is true that the Lord will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, it is equally true that He wills to have mercy, and has already had mercy on every soul that repents of its sin and puts its trust in Jesus! Why cavil at a Truth of God because you cannot understand it? Why kick against the pricks to your own wounding, when the pricks remain as sharp as ever and will not be moved by all your kicking?

The Lord of Hosts has purposed it to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the excellency of the earth: It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. The Lord will bring down the high tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree to flourish that no flesh may glory in His Presence, so that the Lord may be exalted. Bow, then, to Sovereign Grace! Should He not be King? Who else should rule but God? And if He is a King, has He not a right to forgive the felon condemned to die and yet give no reason to you? Leave that question, and all others, and come to Jesus, whose open arms invite you!

He says, Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. If you wait till you have solved all difficulties, you will never come at all! If you refuse Christ till you understand all mysteries, you will perish in your sins! Come while the gate is opened and while the lamp holds out to burn! He has said it, Him that comes unto Me, I will in nowise cast out.

I must still mention another reason for the quarrel of the Nazarenes with our Lord. It was probably because they loved not such plain, personal speaking as the Savior gave them. Some hearers affect great delicacy. You must not call a spade a spade. It is an agricultural implement, and only to be spoken of in dainty terms. But our Lord used no fine talk. He was a plain speaking Man, and He spoke to men plainly. He knew that men would go to Hell, let Him be as plain as He might, and therefore He would not let them have the excuse that they could not understand the preacher.

He put the Truth of God so clearly that not only could they understand it, but they could not misunderstand it if they tried. His preaching was most personal. You will say. He did not speak about Capernaum but all about Nazareth, and this helped, also, to make them angry. Once again He gave a hint that He meant to bless the Gentiles. Elijah had fed and Elisha had healed a Gentile, and this undoubted fact made the Jew set his teeth, for he feared that the monopoly of blessing was to cease, and that gifts of Divine Grace were to be given to others besides the sons of Israel. A Gentile dog was to be admitted into the family, to be permitted not only to eat the crumbs that fell from the table, but to be changed into a child the Jews could not bear it.

Now there is a great deal of this monopolizing spirit among selfrighteous people. Why I have heard people sayshocked I have been to hear itOh, they are having meetings for getting together these girls off the street. It is no useyou may try, but it is no use trying to reform them. And then here are other people looking after these low characters, going into those nasty back slums. Well, if people get there, they ought to be there! We ought not to lower ourselves to look after such good-fornothing people. There is the Churchif they do not choose to golet them stay away.

As to going after the very lowest, some people turn up their noses at the very idea of it. This is just the horrible old Jewish monopolizing of the Gospelas if these people were not as good as you, for all their sins and for all their poverty. But though their vice may happen to be outward, it is not a whit more detestable than the pride of some people which make a boast of a self-righteousness which does not exist. I do not know which God looks upon with the greater abhorrencethe open sinner or the openly good living person whose inward pride stands out against the Gospel! It matters nothing to the physician whether he sees the eruption outside the skin or knows it to be inside. Perhaps, he thinks, it may be harder to get at the second than at the first.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ will have you to know, however good you are, that you must come to Him just as the vilest of the vile must come. You must come as guiltyyou cannot come as righteous. You must come to Jesus to be washed. You must come to Him to be clothed. You think you do not want washing. You fancy you are clothed, and covered, and beautiful to look upon. But oh, the garb of outward respectability, and of outward morality often is nothing but a film to hide an abominable leprosy till Gods Grace changes the heart! God requires truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part He will make us to know wisdom.

But this superficial England of ours is perfectly satisfied with outside gentility, and you may be as rotten as you will within the heart. The living God will have no pretenceyou must be born again! This doctrine, too, is one which people cannot endure! They will say hard things of the preacher, and for this reason they reject Christ. But in so doing they reject their own mercy! They reject the only hope of Heaven, and they seal their own destruction! I wish the time did not fly quite so rapidly when I have such a subject as this. I seem to have the consciences of some of you here, and I am hammering away as with a big sledge hammer, but I am afraid there is very little effect produced because the iron is cold.

O that the Lord would thrust you into the furnace and make you like melted iron! Then the hammer of the Gospel and the Law together might well beat you into something like an evangelical shape, and you might be saved. Gods arm is strong enough! Gods fire is fierce enough to melt even the iron of self-righteousness!

III. And now, WHAT CAME OF IT? This came of it. First of all, they thrust the Savior out of the synagogue and then they tried to hurl Him down the brow of the hill. These were His friendsgood, respectable peoplewho would have believed it of them? You saw that goodly company in the synagogue who sang so sweetly, and listened so attentively. Would you have guessed that there was a murderer inside every one of their coats? It only needed the opportunity to bring the murderer outfor there they areall trying to throw Jesus off the cliff!

We do not know how much devil there is inside any one of us. If we are not renewed and changed by Divine Grace, we are heirs of wrath even as others. The description which is given in Romans, that second chapter, that awful chapter, is a truthful picture of every child of Adam. He may look respectable. He may seem to be a lamb, and to be so quiet that a weaned child might play in the cockatrices den. But he is a deadly cockatrice for all that.

The snake may sleep and you may play with it, but let it wake and you will see that it is a deadly thing. Sin may lie dormant in the soul, but there may come a time when it will wake up. And there may come a time in England when those good people who hang on to the skirts of Christ, and attend our places of worship may actually develop into persecutors. It was once so in England. The people who used to hear the Gospel at the close of Henry the Eighths daythe people that were so pleased to hear Hugh Latimer under Edward the Sixthwere quite as ready to carry firewood under Queen Mary, and to burn the servants of the Lord.

My dear Friends, your opposition to Christ may not take that active form, but unless you are converted you are enemies to Jesus. You deny it? I ask you why, then, do you not believe in Him? Why do you not trust Him? You are not opposed to Him, why do not you yield to Him? As long as you do not trust Him, I can only set you down as His enemy. You give this clearest proof of ityou will not even be saved by Him! If there were a man drowning, and another man put out his hand, and he said, No, I will not be saved by you, I would sooner be drowned, what a proof that would be of enmity! What proof could be more sure?

That is your caseyou refuse to be saved by Christs Grace. Oh, what an enemy of Christ at the bottom of your heart you must be! But what came of it? Why, though they thus thrust Him out, they could not hurt the Savior. The hurt was all their own. Christ did not fall from the hill. He escaped by His miraculous powerand the Gospel will not be hurt even though you reject it and do worse than reject itand set yourself in opposition to it.

Jesus Christ glides through the midst of His enemies uninjured. Through the persecutions of Nero and Diocletian, the true Christ of God went on His way. Through all the burnings of Mary, and the hangings of Elizabeth, right on through the times of Claverhouse and his dragoons, the good old Gospel remained unconquered by its foes! It abides still to this very day the same! It escapes from all the anger of its most virulent foes.

But what became of them? Well, they had rejected Christ, and He left themleft them unhealed because of their unbelief. That will be your case. And now it is 1,860 years ago and the souls of all these men of Nazareth have appeared before the Judgment Seat. And in a few more years, when the great trumpet shall sound, all those men who tried to throw Christ down over the cliff will have to look at Him. And they will see Him seated where they cannot grasp Him, nor abuse Him, nor cast Him down.

What a sight it will be for them! Will they say to one another, Is not this Josephs son? When they see Him sitting on the Throne of His glory, and all His holy angels with Him, will they say, His mother, is she not with us, and His brothers and his sisters? Will they, then, say to Him, Physician, heal Yourself? Oh, what a change will come over those bronze brows! How for every sneer there will be a blush, and for each word of anger there will be cries, and weeping, and wailings, and gnashing of teeth!

My Hearers, the same thing will happen to you! Within a few more years you and I will have mixed our bones with mother earth. And then after that shall come a general resurrection. We shall live and stand in the latter days upon the earth and Christ will come in the clouds of Heaven. And you who heard the Gospel and despised Him, what will you say? Have your apology ready, for you will soon be called upon to say why judgment should not be pronounced upon you. You cannot say you did not know the Gospel or that you were not warned of the result of rejecting it! You have known. What more could you have known? But your heart would not receive what you knew.

When the Lord begins to say, Depart, you cursed, what claim will you have not to be numbered with that accursed company? It will be in vain to say, We have eaten and drunk in Your Presence, and You have taught in our streets, for that will be an aggravation that the kingdom of Heaven came so near unto you and yet you received it not! And when the thunderbolts are launched and He who was once the Lamb so full of mercy shall shine forth as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, full of majestythat thunderbolt shall be winged with extra force and speed with this tremendous factthat you rejected Christ, that you heard Him but turned a deaf ear to Himthat you neglected the great salvation, and did despite to the Spirit of Grace!

As I cannot even hope to find words that can have the force of Gods own language, I shall close this sermon by reading you these few words which I beg you to lay to your heart. They are in the first chapter of Proverbs, at the 24th verse: 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 have none of My reproof, I, also, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes; when your fear comes as desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer. They shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

God save you from that curse.   
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FEVER AND ITS CURE   
NO. 2174

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1890.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPT. 11, 1890.

**And He arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simons house. And Simons wifes mother was taken with a great fever, and they besought Him for her. And He stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them. Luke 4:38, 39.**

PETER was of Bethsaida but he had a house at Capernaum. Is it not highly probable that he had moved there to be near our Lords headquarters, to hear everything that He said, to see all His miracles, and to yield Him constant attendance and service? I think it was so. This is what we should expect from the Lords true-hearted followers and I am sad when I remember how many professed disciples of Jesus nowadays act on another principle. When they are moving they do not consider whether they shall be near a House of Prayer or a place of usefulness. Though their souls have been fed and they have declared intense love to the Church and the pastor, they nevertheless go away with a light heart to places where there are no means of Grace.

Should these things be so? In choosing our residence, we should have large respect to its relation to our souls work and welfare. We should ask, Shall we be where we can honor our Lord? In his house, Simon willingly entertained his wifes mother, which is presumptive evidence that he was a good man, willing out of love to run risk of discomfort. We have evidence that his wifes mother was a good woman, for the moment that she was healed, she arose and ministered unto themwhereas in too many casesan invalid and aged person would demand to be waited upon. She was a blessing to any house, for she evidently lent all the strength she had to the work of the family.

I know just such women whose very life is to minister to others. Happy Peter to have such a mother-in-law! Happy mother-in-law to have such a son! Good as the tenants were, sickness came to the house. Capernaum was situated, like several other towns, in that low, marshy district which surrounds the northern part of the sea of Galilee, near the spot where the Jordan runs into it. There was always a great deal of fever about and that fever, putting on its very worst form, had come to Peters house as a great fever, and had laid low his excellent mother-in-law, much to the grief of all. However dear you may be to the heart of God and however near you live to Him, you will be liable to sorrow. Although affliction comes not forth of the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.

None of us can hope for entire exemption from afflictionI am not sure that we should wish for it. But then, it so happenedand it so happens alwaysthat just when the trial came, Jesus came, too. It is very beautiful to see the Lord of Life close on the track of the fever, ready to deliver His chosen one. When a great affliction comes to a house, a great blessing is coming, too. As our tribulations abound, so do our consolations. I have often noticed that when we are exceedingly glad, some ill news will hurry up to calm our excitement. It has happened so to me this very week returning from a happy meeting, a telegram met me to announce a sorrowful bereavement. On the other hand, when we are exceedingly sorrowful, the Lord, by His Holy Spirit, causes a sense of peace and rest to steal over us and sustain us.

How often have I found the Divine Presence more consciously revealed and more sweetly sustaining in the hour of trouble than at any other season! I would not invite the fever to my house, but if Jesus would come with it, I would not be alarmed at its approach! If we see our Lord riding on the pale horse, we will welcome the horse for the sake of its Rider! Come, Lord Jesus, come how You will! But suffer not the trial to come alone!

When Jesus came, they told Him of her. Make a practice of telling the Lord about all your family concerns. Bring sicknesses and other troubles to your best Friend. Do it at family prayer, but do it, also, alone at your bedside. If Jesus has come to stay with you, He will not hold Himself aloof from your anxieties. He comes with His great sympathetic heart to be afflicted in your afflictions. Keep no secret from Him, since He keeps none from you for, The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. So Peter and the rest told Jesus of the good woman who was bedridden with fever and at once the Lord Jesus went into the room and brought His Divine power to bear upon the disease that she might be at once restored.

He stood over her. He rebuked the fever. He took her by the hand and lifted her upand in a moment the fever was goneand she was not only well, but strong! You have heard this incident preached from before, but not in the way in which I shall use it. It is a very singular thing that, as far as I know, in the whole range of homiletics there is not one in which this cure of the fever is treated as the other healing miracles have been. The other miraculous cures have been legitimately regarded by preachers of the Word as types of the removal of certain forms of sin. When we preach about the leper, we talk to you concerning great sin and grievous defilement. When we consider the story of Lazarus, who had been dead, we perceive that every point of his resurrection bristles with spiritual teaching.

If it is so in other miracles, why not in this? Why is one miracle to be looked upon as instructive as to spiritual and moral Truth and another is left unused? I shall use this miracle of the healing of the fevered one for ourselves, since it may be that some of us are mentally or spiritually sick of a fever. There is a fever of soul which comes even upon gracious people which only Christ can heal. Oh, that He may heal us now! Here will be the run of my discourse. First, spiritual fevers are common. Secondly, they are from several causes. Thirdly, these are mischievous in their action and fourthly, there is One who can cure these fevers.

Oh, that I may be helped so to speak of this spiritual disease at this time, that while you hear my voice, you may also feel my Masters touch and go your way restored from your fever!

I. Let me, first, remind you, that SPIRITUAL FEVERS ARE VERY COMMON. A fever begins with a kind of restlessness. The patient cannot be quiet nor be at ease in any position. He is not pleased with anything for more than a moment. He cannot help ithe is tossed to and frohe is like the troubled sea. He suspects everybody and has confidence in nothing. Are there not many who are in that condition with regard to spiritual things? Their religion is a question, rather than a doctrinean experiment and not an experience. Their own interest in Christ is a grave anxiety rather than an assured delight. They believe the promise, but cannot grasp it for themselves so as to feel sure and happy.

A sermon full of good cheer does not afford them a cup of comfort. They are so feverish that they settle to nothing. No promise, no Truth of God, no heavenly gift can yield them reposethey are tossed up and down like the locust. This restlessness affects them with regard to temporal things, toothey are always anxious, doubtful, timorous. There is that excellent woman, Martha. She is here tonight, but she has had a task to tear herself away from the washing and mending. And while she has been sitting here she has been wondering all the while whether she put the guard before the fire when she came out. She has felt three or four times in her pocket for her keys. She is half afraid that an accident will happen to the baby before she gets back. She is anxious about everything she can think of and anxious about some things she has not thought of. Will her husband be home before she gets back? How will he be? Will he like his supper? Will the children all be well tomorrow? Evidently she has the domestic fever upon her and rest is out of the question. She must worry and fidgetthere is no consoling her.

I know what it is as a minister to feel very feverish about the characters and proceedings of the members of the Church. I have been told that farmers are very liable to the weather fever. It is either too wet or too dry. There may be good times for the root-crops, but then, it is bad for the corn. Merchants have the speculative fever, and workmen the strike fever. Some of you trades folk are wonderfully feverish in reference to your shop and your stock-taking. Will you, after all, have a good season and make a fair profit? When a man falls into that state, although we do not call in a doctor, there is great need to call in the heavenly Physician. A Christian in good, sound, spiritual health is calm, quiet, peaceful, happy, full of reposefor he is obedient to that sweet verse of the PsalmRest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. This restlessness is a sign of the times, but it is a great pity that it should afflict the people of God.

Some folks with this fever are troubled with the burning heat of irritability. They take offense where none is intended. You cannot put your words in the right order to satisfy them. Members of Churches who get into this irritable state are always imagining that they have enemies all around themeverybody has not been quite respectful to their royal highnesses they treasure up little slights and feel highly indignant. I know more people with this fever than I should like to mention. It is a happy thing to live with a Brother who is spiritually and mentally sound, for then you may speak freely and you need not be afraid of being misunderstood. But feverish folk make you an offender for a word, or a look. They are grieved because you did not see them, or did see themeither way you are wrong!

One feels that he is like a man walking among eggshe has to be careful, even to a painful degree. Let us be gentle with the irritable Brother. He cannot help it, poor man! It is not the man so much as it is the fever that is in him.

The influence of fever is seen in other ways. It is intermittent and makes the patient change from hot to cold. Feverish persons love a religion of excitement. They are eager and impatient, omit repentance and leap into a false security. Their zeal is not according to knowledge and so it is fierce as the blaze of thorns under a pot and dies out as soon. What haste they make! Everything must be done immediatelythe patient waiting of faith is too slow for them. They are determined to drive the Church before them and drag the world after themto plod on in Scriptural ways they cannot endure. We like to see the healthy heat of earnestness, but theirs is the burning heat of passion. This fever heat soon turns to a chill and they shiver with dislike of the very thing they cried up so loudly. They are as cold as they were hot! And again they turn to be as hot as they were cold!

A strange fever is upon them and you know not where to find them. The steady warmth of vital principle, intelligent faith, true love to Christ and zeal for the conversion of souls has little in common with the fever of fanaticism. May God grant that we may always have the warmth of healthy life, but may we be saved from being delirious one day and lethargic the next! Religious inflammation is the dangerous counterfeit of holy zeal. Be as hot as you will, but do not turn cold directly, or else we shall tremble for you.

A worse kind of fever, perhaps, is that which shows itself in thirst of different kinds. Some suffer from the yellow fever of avaricethey thirst for gold waterand the more they drink the more the thirst consumes them. They rise up early, they sit up late, they eat the bread of carefulness and all they long for is to gain and hoardthe love of Jesus is not near to their hearts. They are all hack and hurry, toil and turmoil, woe and worry. The deadly yellow fever is upon themthey must lay up much goods for many years and add field to field till they are left alone in the earth. God save His people from even a touch of this fever!

Some are smitten with the scarlet fever of ambition. They must be everybody. Some would be great, greater, greatest and then greater still, always sighing for the pre-eminence, like Diotrephes. Ambition, kept in due check, may be right enough, but when it rises to fever heat, it is a great sin. The man does not enjoy what he has because he is lusting for more. And meanwhile he treads down his brethren and becomes high-minded and unkind. While anyone is still a little higher than himself, he is envious and malicious. May the Lord cure us of these fevers if we have even the smallest trace of them!

Alas, alas! I have to mention one other fever, which is a kind of gastric fever, a fever of the stomach! It comes to men who have degraded themselves below the brutes by intoxication. When they seek to abstain and quit the cup, a drink fever hinders them. Some imagine that it is an easy thing to escape from drunkenness, but it is not so. Those who are now true children of God have given us an awful description of the hankering which came upon them months after they had given up the drink. Often it seemed to them nothing but a miracle that they kept clear of the temptationthey felt as if they must drink or die! O dear Friends, have great pity upon the drunk in his struggle to escape! Help him all you can by words of encouragement and especially by the grand encouragement of your own example, for, believe me, it is a horrible fever and happy is he who has never felt it. If any of you have it upon you, look to Almighty Grace for deliverance, for if you look to anything short of this, I fear you will go back to your sin.

Yet one more fever I would mention. There is one which I may well call brain fevera very common disease nowadays. Persons cannot be satisfied with the old doctrines of the Gospelthey must have something new. They do not know that in theology nothing new is true and nothing true is new. God has given us a faith which He once and for all delivered unto the saints with no intention that it should ever be changed. Do you think that Revelation is imperfect and that we are to improve upon it? After all, then, it is not Gods Revelation that we are to believe but our own deductions and our own improvements thereupon? God forbid that we should fall under such a delusion!

Very many young menand I dare say young women, too, though I do not so often meet with themhave begun to feel that they must think, which, also, we should be glad for them to do! But they dream that they must think their own thoughts and they will not submit their thoughts to the instruction of the Spirit of God. This is a vain thought! They claim that they may think as they please and so it comes to pass that their thoughts are not Gods thoughts. They diverge more and more from the eternal Truth of God till they wander among the dark mountains of error and perish in utter infidelity! God keep us from this! If this fever is upon any one of you, may the cooling hand of the Holy Spirit and the sobering influence of a Divine experience bring you back to spiritual and mental health.

These fevers are as common as they are fatal. If you, dear Hearer, have not suffered from them, many others have done so and we are anxious for their curetherefore, we would bring them to Jesus who can rebuke the feverand heal the sick ones.

II. Secondly, THESE FEVERS ARISE FROM MANY CAUSES. Peters wifes mother may have been struck with fever through the undrained and boggy spots around the sea of Galilee, especially where the Jordan makes a marsh. She dwelt in a low spot, where the air was full of malaria and the fever pounced upon her. Ah, Christian people! If you live below your privileges. If you live in the marshland of worldliness. If prayer is neglected. If the Bible is not read. If the great Truths of the Gospel do not fill your meditations. If you sojourn much among ungodly folk and make them your companionsyou are living in a low situation where you will get one

or other of these fevers before long!

If you climb the mountains of confidence in God and dwell near Him and rest your souls upon Him, the fever will soon vanish! But if you continue in the hollows of unbelief and the damp places of worldliness, you will grow more and more anxious and restless and will thirst for evil things. You who dwell in the misty lowlands doubt your own love to Jesus. If you climbed the hills of joy and dwelt on the heights of fellowship, you would know your love to God and find it growing daily! The sunlight of His Countenance is a sure cure for the fever of anxiety! Abide with Him and the heat of anxiety will depart, your irritability will disappear and you will be calm and joyful!

A second great cause of spiritual fever is allowing things to stagnate. The moment the sanitary authorities cut drains, let the waters run out of the land and carry away the filth, the fever begins to abate. Stagnant water breeds a noxious atmosphere and fever is sure to come. When the waters are no longer putrid, but have free course, then the source of fever is taken away. How many people get into a feverish state through having everything stagnant! You do not teach in the Sunday schoolyour teaching power is stagnant. You never go out to the village station to preach your talking power is stagnant. You have nobody to pray foryour intercessory power is stagnant. Everything about you is still and stale. You have nothing to live for, nothing to doand therefore your whole being is shut up within itselfand this breeds mischief. The Lord help you to cut a good wide drain and let your life run out to some useful purpose instead of hoarding it up by selfishness. Spiritual fever soon disappears before holy, unselfish activity.

Fevers, again, come in through excessive heat . In countries where the temperature rises high, fever is more common and fatal than with us. The white man dies and even the black man finds it hard to live in parts of Africa. I fear that life in London is growing very much like the tropical regions. Our forefathers took things rather more coolly than we do. In Cromwells time a writer tells us that he walked all down Cheapside in the early morning and found all the blinds down because at every house they were having family prayer. Where will you go to find such a state of things in this burning age? You are up in the morning and at itand all day long you are at it, and at it, and at it! Little rest is given to our minds and yet we need holy rest. We need to sit at Jesus feet with Maryand because we do not do so, the burden and heat of the day are telling upon our spiritual constitutionsand we are not strong as we need to be.

But, worst of all, fever is often born of filth. I suppose that even excessive heat would not produce it if it were not for decaying matter which, in rotting, gives out evil vapors and deadly gases. There is nothing more putrid in the natural world than sin is in the moral world. Flee from sin as you would from a reeking dunghill of rottenness. I charge you, children of God, be clean in yourselves and your surroundings. Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. It is hard to avoid contact with evil in these daysbut yet we must aim at it. Our public walls disgust us with indecencies of the most staring kindthey make us blush for the times.

We can, however, keep ourselves from the resorts of the frivolous, the vicious and the drunkenand I beseech you, as you love the Lord and as you desire to be healthy in His sightstand not in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scorners. Run not with the multitude to do evil! Come out from among thembe you separatetouch not the unclean thing, for then God will be a Father unto you and you shall be His sons and daughters. The corruption which reeks around us has the dread tendency to breed fevers in our minds of the most perilous kindwe must, therefore, use our utmost endeavors, by the Grace of God, to keep ourselves disinfected.

Fever also comes of overcrowding . Where people are closely packed together in their sleeping places, breathing exhausted air, disease lurks as in its chosen lair. I am afraid that most of us get too crowded by fellowship with menconversing with them from morning to night, working with them, dealing with them in businessand thus learning their ways and catching their spirit. Oh, to get into the purer atmosphere of Heaven and to be alone with God! In the spiritual realm we find space and air enough for a soul to breathe freely. Where God manifests Himself to us we are refreshed with breezes from the eternal hills! Why are we wearied with mans talk, or with womens chat, when conversation with God would revive our spirits? Oh, to be quit of men and quiet with God! Amid this crowd we find our souls suffocating, but when we are on the mount of God we breathe freely and feel revived.

Not to leave out any one thing which may instruct us, I would remind you that fevers are often caused by poor diet. Persons have not enough to eat and the fever germs fructify in their weakness. With many Christians the rule seems to be one spiritual meal a week. Sunday morning is the occasion for baiting the religious horse. Your very respectable Christian person goes out to worship on Sunday morningbut at no other time. What does he do on Sunday afternoon? This witness says nothing. What does he do on Sunday evening? He is at home taking his ease. At a Prayer Meeting, some time ago, one Brother prayed that the Lord would bless those who were at home on beds of sickness and on sofas of well-ness. The last words were unexpected, but very necessary. Certain of our friends practice the art of tarrying at home, but I fear they do not divide the spoil.

As to Prayer Meetings, and week-night lectures, these are regarded rather as tasks than privileges by many professors. They live on one meal a week. Would any of you, who are doing this, oblige me with a trial of this regimen in reference to your bodies? Will you only eat on a Sunday morning? You shall take what you please at that one meal and consume as much as you can of itbut you must have only that one meal till next week! Do you decline the experiment? I think you are wise. I should not expect to see you here often to report your experience. I feel sure you would break through the regulation before it had reached its full result. Therefore, I pray you, do not carry out the experiment of spiritual starvation, lest you die in the operation!

This neglect of heavenly food brings many Christians into so low a state that spiritual fever readily fastens upon them. Alas, many have poor spiritual diets. Spiritual meals, nowadays, when they are taken, do not

amount to much. In many a place where Christ was preached by a good old man who is now in Heaven, you will find that anything else is held forth except the Lord Jesus. Your cultured gentleman sickens at the idea of preaching about the precious blood. He calls the cardinal doctrine of the Atonement, the theology of the shambles. Shame on his profane tongue! He is ashamed to speak of original sin, or the new birth, or to tell men that if they are not saved they will be cast into Hell! He is too refined to speak the plain Truth of God! You may eat a thousand meals of his sort of meat before you will know that you have had a mouthful! It is all light as air and unsubstantial as froth. Such wind can never satisfy a hungering soul, but it can starve it down so low that disease preys upon it.

Some become fevered, not so much by what they do themselves, as by being in contact with others who are full of the disease, for it is exceedingly contagious. I can bear witness to that. It has been my lot to deal with the fevers of doubt, depression, anxiety and despairand it is hard to deal with these without catching them! I remember that one day I saw several mournful cases of depression. I will not say that the patients ought to have been in an asylum, but I am sure that many in those places are as reasonable as those I conversed with. They were sadly doubting, fearing, trembling and dreadingand it was no light work to treat their unhappy cases. I tried to comfort them and I hope that I succeeded in a measure but by the time that I had borne the burdens of a half dozen of them, I needed comfort myself!

It is not easy to lift others up without finding yourself exhausted. I went over all the Gospel arguments for salvation by faith and I heard their objections. I pressed the Truth of God upon them and when they went away smiling, I stayed behind to pray God to make the work effectual and also to lift up the light of His Countenance upon mefor I needed to be filled again after pouring out my soul for others! The fever of depression may be caught while we are acting as surgeons to other fevered ones. If you live with a friend who is always playing on the minor key, you will find your own music growing mournful. If you have companions in life who are nervous, fretful, fearful, melancholyor, what is worse, full of doubts of Godyou will likely be warped as they are and you will soon feel that the sunlight has gone out of your life.

What must you do? Run away from these sorrowful ones? By no means! But you must seek more Divine Grace, that, instead of being dragged down by them, you may draw them upward, by His Grace, to God and brighter things! Be filled with spiritual life and then you will survive your contact with the feeble and diseased. I could not help mentioning thisfor to me it is a frequent cause of fever and I would that I could rise far above it!

III. Thirdly, and as briefly as I can, THIS FEVER, IN ANY OF ITS FORMS, IS MISCHIEVOUS. What does it do? Well, fever puts you altogether out of order. You cannot precisely say where a fever begins or ends, or in what organ it operates most powerfully for it puts the whole system out of gear. Nothing is right. You feel as if you could not sit, or lie, or be quiet in any position. You cannot do anything and yet you must be doing. Now, when a soul gets into the fever of unbelief, fear and anxiety, it is in general disorder. Prayer is fevered. Song languishes. Patience fails. Service drags. The mind is like a harp whose strings are out of tune. It is a mischievous thing, this fevermischievous to every faculty.

And then it brings sin and misery. In the commencement of a fever, pain is usually felt in the joints and other parts of the body. If I am fearful and anxious, I am in mental pain. If I am doubting and dreading, I am in pain. If I am fretful, irritable, petulant, murmuringI must have pain and hence it is an evil thing to be overtaken by a spiritual fever. Mental fever takes away beauty from the Christian. A man who has a fever has his features pinched and drawn. A practiced doctor can tell when a patient has the fever by the very look of his face. Looking at his eyes and other features, he says, This man has a typhoid upon him. I am sure of it.

Are there not some Christians who do not look as they used to look? They are ill-humored, or timid, or fretful, or hastyand all through the inward fever. Their voice has lost the joyful note it used to have and their whole deportment is dreary. The hallelujahs have gone. The hosannas have died out. The Lord would have His people beautiful and gladsome. He made them that they might show forth His praise. It is no small evil when the heat of spiritual fever dries up the moisture of our Graces and turns our comeliness into corruption. This mental heat brings with it languor and weakness. The man is a Christian, but he is not much of a Christian. He lives, but he does not grow, nor exhibit strength.

What a difference there is between the able-bodied worker and the invalid! Here is a railway cutting to be made through a hill and we need a number of working men to do it. They tell me that we can get a hundred men at once if we apply to the Hospital for Consumptives. But we do not see the wisdom of the advice. Poor fellowswhat a misery it would be to see them doing their little best with pain and labor! I had rather not be the leader of such a band. Give me a company of stout English knaves with bone and muscle! Why, the mountain dies before their spades like the waters before the blast of the north wind! The road is cut through the mountain and the men are gone to perform like wonders elsewhere.

We need, in these days, Christian men with stamina in them! What work healthy souls will do! But when they catch fever in their souls, what painful and futile efforts they make! Dear Friends, it is to be feared that those who give way to fever may drift into delirium, by-and-by, for fevers often lead to that. My good friend who begins complaining just a little does not know that he will grow to be one of the most obstinate grumblers in the world! My good Sister yonder, who is only a little nervous and fretful, does not know into what an abyss of unbelief she will yet plunge! If you say one word against God, there is no reason why you should not say two. And if you say two, the devil will soon teach you to say 20, till at last you rave at the Lord God! Oh, that we could be silent before Him, in holy calm and peace! We should then escape that delirium of rebellious dread into which so many are hurried.

If, by Gods Grace, we are delivered from this fever, it may leave behind it sad remains. Any doctor will tell you that fevers are not only to be dreaded for what they are, but for what they leave behind them. When a man is cured of fever, he may yet be injured for the rest of his life. And if

you and I do not keep quiet before Godand calm and happy, but begin to get anxious and willful, avaricious, and ambitiouswe may hurt ourselves seriously for all time! And, it may be, even on our death-bed we shall look back with sorrow to that day of unbelief when we grieved the Lord and lost His Presence. The Lord keep us from these fevers in every degree!

I must also remind you of one thing more, Beloved this disease, as I have said, is catching. I brought this fact forward under our second head, but I must mention it again. If some of you could fret and trouble and worry yourselvesand did not, at the same time, injure othersit might not so much matter. But the sad fact is there are some Christians who drag others down into their own wretchedness. You spoil the joys of the saints! They are willing to comfort you but you ought not to be so ready to cause them disquietude. Some of you are enough to give the fever of despondency to a whole parish! Gods ministers are willing to comfort you, but they ought not to be called upon to spend so much time in entering into your case. It is a dreadful waste of time and thoughtthis looking after the fevered ones. When an army has to carry half its number in ambulances, it takes well-near the other half to carry them and no fighting can be done.

The cruelties of war are great, but I am told that the aim is now to not kill the opposite party, but to wound them. If you kill a man, he counts one as a loss to the other sidebut if you wound a man and another man is called out to look after him, that counts as a loss of two from the fight. This is the sort of craft whereby Satan injures the host of God. He does not kill off some of you by leading you into gross sin, but he wounds you so that you need more than one to look after youand thus the strength of the army of salvation is greatly diminished. I ought to be spending my strength in winning souls, but instead I have to look after you who have the fever. I am content to be a nurse, but I had rather be winning souls.

IV. Lastly, THERE IS ONE WHO CAN CURE THE FEVER. I am afraid that I have given rather a sad description and I am sorry that some of you have been obliged to say, However sad, it is true of us. But observe, dear Friends, the curewhich is not worked by medicine, or surgery, or any profound system of the doctors. The cure lies here. The poor patient lies flat in her bed. We read, She was laid and sick of a fever. She could not, therefore, sit up, much less rise from the bed. When she opened her eyes and looked up, she saw the Lord Jesus Christ standing over her. O fevered soul! Open your eyes tonight and see Jesus standing over you! With tender love and Infinite compassion He looks down upon you. He shields you, thinks of you and watches over you for good. He will help you, therefore, fear not. Over you, tonight, He broods as does an eagle over its young. Jehovah-Jesus bows over you with fullness of love and power! In your present trouble, fear and depression of spirit, Jesus stands over you and His eyes and His heart are upon you!

Then next, to her great surprise, the Lord touched her. Dear Master, touch the fevered ones tonight! Oh, to feel that He is a real Man like yourself, your Brother, very near to you! This is the touch which will drive out the fever. I love the old verse

*A Man there was, a real Man   
Who once on Calvary died,   
That same dear Man exalted sits   
High at His Fathers side.*

The Lord Jesus is a real Man and so He touches you in your feeble and suffering nature and He seems to say, In all your afflictions I am afflicted. When saints are in the furnace, One like unto the Son of God is there with them! They are sufferers, but He is the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief. The Lord give you to feel the touch of the true humanity of Christ!

We read that when our Lord had touched her, He rebuked the fever. Your feverishness deserves His rebuke. Oh, that He would bid it be gone! Oh, that He would say tonight, Be gone unbelief! Be gone anxiety! Be gone fretfulness! Be gone doubt and fear! The winds and the waves heard His rebuke and from their noise and clamor they hushed themselves to a great calm. Oh, that Jesus would come, now, and speak to your feverishness and you shall be as happy as the birds of Paradise!

I had a great trouble last nightI will not tell you what it wasa great trouble to my heart. But this morning I had a great joy which I will tell you. It is this noteDear Sir, I feel so happy to tell you that the Lord has pardoned a poor outcast of society. I got into your place in a crowd, hoping nobody would see me. I had been out all night and was miserable. While you were preaching about the leper, [See Sermon No. 2162, And Why Not Me?] my whole life of sin rose up before me. I saw myself worse than the lepercast away by everybody. There is not a sin I was not guilty of. As you went on I looked straight away to Jesus. A gracious answer came, Your sins, which are many, are forgiven. I never heard any more of your sermon! I felt such joy to think that Jesus died even for a poor harlot! Long before you get this letter I trust to be on the way to my dear home I ran away from. Do please pray for me, that I may be kept by Gods almighty power. I can never thank you enough for bringing me to Jesus and so on.

If it had not been for that bit about going home, I might have had some doubt about it. But when a fallen girl goes home to her father and mother, it is a safe case! This gives me joydo you wonder? To see souls saved is Heaven to me! I find that my Lord has a gracious way of laying on a plaster where He makes a sore. If the heart is heavy with grief, He can balance it with consolation.

The next thing Jesus did was to raise her up. You must have felt, when lying very ill, as if you were buried in the bed. So the Savior gave His hand to her and He lifted her up. She did not think that she could rise, but with His aid she sat up. Then He gave her an instant cure and at the same time renewed her strength. No trace of fever remained. She was perfectly well. Her instinct, as a matronly woman and head of the household, was to rise at once to prepare a meal for her Benefactor and His disciples. Oh, that you doubting ones, you fevered ones might at once be cured and lifted up so that you would immediately set about serving the Lord and ministering to those around you! Come, let us be as happy as ever we can be and as useful as it lies in our power to beand may the fever never

visit any one of us again!

On the contrary, as you go home, trip over the pavements with a sense of spiritual health! And when you get home, say at once, I must minister unto Jesus. He has driven out my cares and fears and soothed my mind and therefore out of love I will spend and be spent to His praise. God bless you, for the Saviors sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONPsalm 37.** HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK708, 37 (SONG II), 746.

A LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:   
DEAR FRIENDSBy Gods goodness, though compassed with infirmity, I have preached right on through the year although I have felt gradually growing feeble. During the last week of the term I was obliged to keep in my bedthe body was in pain and the mind would not work. It was a general running down of all my powers. So I left home thoroughly exhausted. The journey to this delightful haven is a long one, but sitting here in the warm, clear sunlight I feel that I am none the worse for the thousand miles of traveling. The change in climate is almost beyond belief! A few days in such air as this will set me up.

What a change from being steamed to death in the almost solid fogs of London! Thanks be unto God for such a place of recovery for those who are spent in service! I would get out of it all the benefit I can that my ministry may show vigor of mind and power of Divine Grace. Bright upon the tablet of my heart is the record of what was done by Tabernacle friends on Friday, November 7, when the people willingly offered of their substance unto the Lord and all that was needed for the repair of the house of our assembly was brought in at one stroke! A thousand times do I thank all those generous givers. Outside friends have also sent in grand amounts to provide for the other funds and thus the Lord has put His servant beyond care for the needs of the work at this present. I write because continually requested to do so and to assure you of my love in Christ Jesus. Mentone, November 15, 1890.   
Yours truly,

*C. H. SPURGEON*  
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #1071 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE MINISTRY OF GRATITUDE   
NO. 1071

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 15, 1872, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.

**And immediately she arose and ministered unto them. Luke 4:39.**

PETERS wifes mother had been sick of a great fever and had been restored by the touch of the Saviors hands and by the power of the Saviors word. The Grace of God does not secure us from trial. The house of Peter and of Andrew, (for it was common to them both), was a highly favored one. The Grace of God had passed by many other houses and had selected this for its dwelling place and yet in that abode there was great sickness the wifes mother lay sick of a fever and was near death. This was no small grief to the householdbut that grief was for their lasting benefit.

God loves His chosen too well to let them always live without the rod. If He loved us less He might allow us unalloyed pleasure, but the love of our wise Father is too great to deprive us of the saved benefits of affliction. Sickness came to that house not as an enemy but as a friend, for it was the means whereby Christs great power was made manifest to that family and through His power His love. The wifes mother could never have been so distinguished a subject of the Redeemers power if she had not been prostrated with fever. The malaria from the marshes around the city occasioned her being made a trophy of our Lords Divine energy.

The worst of ills are often the black horses upon which the very best of blessings ride to us. It was no small honor to Peter that his house became the headquarters of the Savior. The sick thronged the door as the sun went down and the Sabbath was over. The multitude brought persons afflicted with all manner of diseases and panted to reach that favored dwelling to lay them before the Lord. The healing power which had displayed itself within poured forth from the house like a mighty flood and all who drank of it were restored. That house contained the springhead and was beyond measure honored by it. Surely for many a year that house would be one of the most notable in the citysurely it would be called the House of the Great Physician.

Not like that ancient house in Antwerp, detestable because it was the den of the Inquisition, but dear to many of the healed ones and their sons as the Hospital of Mercy, the Palace of Blessing. Peter among the Apostles is singularly honored, for everything about him was in some way or other connected with a miracle. His personit was by a miracle that he had walked the waters. It was by a miracle that he had been saved from drowning when the Savior stretched out His hand and bade him stand fast upon the liquid wave. There was a miracle in connection with his boat, for it was from that boat that the miraculous draught of fishes had been taken and it was filled so full that it began to sink and Simon knelt down and adored the Savior.

There was a miracle in connection with Peters rusty swordhe cut off with it the ear of the high priests servant, but the Master healed the wound that his rash defender made. And here, in this case, there was a miracle performed upon his relativehis wifes mother was restored from a great fever by the almighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every Christian man should be ambitious to have the hand of God connected with everything that he has, so that when he looks upon his house he may see Gods Providence in giving it to him. When he looks upon the garments that he wears he may see them to be the livery of love and may view the food upon his table as the daily gift of Divine charity.

In looking back upon his whole biography, the Believer may see bright spots where the Presence of God flames forth and makes the humblest circumstances to be illustriousbut, above all, it ought to be his prayer that Gods hand should be very conspicuous in connection with his relativesthat of every one of them it might be said, The Lord restored her, or, The Lord gave him spiritual life in answer to my prayer. May husband, wife, children, servantsall received healing from the beloved Physician. May our whole household be, holiness unto the Lord, and may all sing for joy because the Lord has done great things for them whereof we are glad!

The occurrence about which we are to speak this morning happened on a Sabbath. Sabbaths were generally Christs great chosen field days to break down the superstitiously rigid observance of the Sabbath among the Pharisees and because it seemed as a holy day to be peculiarly adapted for the display of the greatest works of the holy Savior. It was a Sabbath and the poor patient was probably lying there complaining in her soul that she could not go to the synagogue, or mingle with the people where prayer was sure to be made. Perhaps her fever had reduced her to such a state that she was quite unable to remember Christ the Healer, and unable to breathe a prayer to Him.

But Peter and Andrew went to Him and told the case and besought Him to come and heal her. It is a blessing for you, my Friend, even though you are sick in soul, to have saints for your relativesto have some in the household who will remember you in prayer and speak into the ear of Christ on your behalf. If through despair or depression of spirit you cannot pray for yourself, happy are you that there are compassionate friends who will speak unto the King on your behalf! One Christian in a family may bring a great blessing to it, but here were two, for Simon and his brother Andrew were both here. And if two of you are agreed as touching anything concerning the Masters kingdom, it shall be done unto you.

The two prevailed with the Savior and, that Sabbath, when the patient little dreamed it, the Savior came to her lowly room and standing over her in infinite pity, He first spoke a royal word of rebuke to the disease, and then, lifting her up gently in His own kind familiar manner she found herself perfectly restored to health! What love she must have felt to her gracious Benefactor! Little wonder is it that thankfulness glowed in her heart and being healed, she rose at once and began to serve her Healer. Her ministering commenced from the very minute of her recovery. Of that ministering we are about to speak. Immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

I. Now, the fact that this restored woman began at once to minister to Christ and to His disciples proves, first, THE CERTAINTY OF HER CURE, and there are no better ways of proving the thoroughness of our conversion than by conduct similar to hers. Suppose now, in order to prove that this woman was really restored, we were critically to examine the modes operandi of Christ? Suppose the Master had been accustomed, as He was not, to use one set of ceremonies over everybody whom He healed, and we were to say, Well, He has done this, that and the other, as He is accustomed to do. Therefore the woman is healed.

It would not be at all conclusive reasoning, yet this is the reasoning of a great many today. This child was baptized. This young person was confirmed and afterwards took the sacrament and consequently this individual is regenerated in Baptism and established in Grace, and so on! The ceremonies are correct and therefore the work is done! Some may believe such reasoning but I marvel that they doto us it seems that there is a far better way of testing whether persons have Grace or not! If these aforesaid baptismally-regenerated people and sacramentally-confirmed people live in sin like other people, it appears to us that they have none of the Grace of God in them, let them pretend to have received it however they may! If the woman had still been hot with fever and had all the symptoms of her disease continued in her, it would have availed nothing to have said, This has been done and the otherthe woman would not have been healed. And if men live like unregenerate sinners, depend upon it, the work of the Holy Spirit is not in them!

Suppose the patient had lain there and had begun to talk about how she felt, how much better she was, what a strange sensation passed through her when the Savior rebuked the disease, and how strangely well she felt? Yet if she had not risen up, but had lain there, still, there would have been no evidence of her restorationat any rate none that you or I could judge of. So when persons tell us that they have felt great changes of heart, that they know they are renewed because they enjoy this and love that and hate the other, we are very hopeful and desire to believe what they say. But, after all, trees are known by their fruitand converted people, while they will, themselves, know their inward experience cannot convince us by it! We must see their outward ministering for Christ. If their actions are holy, if their lives are purified, then shall we know, but not till then, that their nature is renewed!

Suppose this good woman, still lying upon her bed, had begun to say, Well, I hope I am healed, and had begun to express some feeble expectation that one day she would be able to exercise the functions of health? We would not have known that she was restored. Something more was needed than mere hopes and expectations. Or suppose she had leaped out of her bed in wild excitement, rushed down the street and performed strange anticsit would have been no proof that she was recoveredbut it would have made us feel sure that she was delirious and the fever still strong upon her!

So when we see persons inactive as to holiness, we cannot believe that they are saved. Or when we see them full of empty excitement about religion but not serving God in the common acts of life, we think them to be in the delirium of a sinful presumption, but cannot regard them as healed by the cooling, calming hand of the Great Physician, who, when He puts out the fever, restores the soul to quiet and peace.

The woman gave a much better proof than any of these could be. This leads us to remark that the only irresistible proof with onlookers of a person being spiritually healed by Christ must be found in the change in his conduct, and especially in his from that moment on living to serve Christ and to be obedient to Him. This is the test and nothing short of it. When we see holy living in the man who was once a gross offender, we are quite sure that Christ has healed him because the man begins to do what he could not have done before.

Perhaps this poor fevered woman might have made some shift to have done something for the Savior, but the unconverted man is dead in trespasses and sinhe may go through forms of religion, but real holiness is far above and out of his sighthe cannot obey the Law of God. His nature is set against ithe is unable to walk in the way of Gods commandments. Therefore, when we see him doing so, we exclaim, This is the finger of God! God has healed that man or else he would not be able to live as he is now living. Besides, the unconverted man, before conversion, hates holiness. He is disinclined to it so that in his case, when his life becomes pure and upright, when he spends and is spent in the service of Jesus Christ, you know that this must be the work of the Holy Spirit in his soul for nothing else could have changed his nature but the same Omnipotence which first of all created him! Gods hand is in that conversion which is proved by the holiness of the mans outward character.

Beside this, while the sinner is disinclined to everything that is holy, we know that he especially despises the Savior and thinks little of His people. Consequently, when a man is brought to serve the Savior and is willing to do good to the children of God for Christs sake, there is a sure mark that a miracle has been worked in him which has touched the secret springs of his being and altogether transformed him. The womans rising up to minister to our Lord was a sure sign of returned health and the change of outward character which leads a man to devote himself to the service of Christ is even more infallibly a proof of true salvation!

I need you to note, however, dear Friends, for a moment, the nature of the acts which this restored woman performed, because they are symbolic of the best form of actions by which to judge of a persons being renewed. Her duties were humble ones. She was probably the head of the household and she began at once to discharge the duties of a housewifeduties unostentatious and commonplace. Many persons who profess to be converted aspire at once to preachinga pulpit for them is the main thing and a large congregation is their ambition! They must do some great thing and occupy the chief seat in the synagogue!

But this good woman did not think of preachingwomen are always best when they dont. She thought of washing Christs feet and preparing Him necessary food which was her proper business. To these kind but simple actions she devoted herself. Attention to humble duties is a better sign of Grace than an ambition for lofty and elevated works. There is probably far more Grace in the loving service of a mother towards Christ in bringing up her children in the fear of God than there might be if she were well known as taking a leading part in great public movements. There may be more service for Christ done by a workman in discharging his duties, as such, and trying to do good to his fellow workmen than if he aspired to become a great leader of the minds and thoughts of others.

Of course there are exceptions, for glorious was Deborah and great shall be her name in Israel! And those who are sent of God to lead His Church shall not be without their reward, but even then, when they have to look for personal evidences of Grace they never dare say, We know that we are passed from death unto life because we preach the Gospel, for they remember that Judas did the same! They never say, We are confident of salvation because God has worked wonders by us, for they remember that the son of perdition had the same distinction! No, Brothers and Sisters, they fall back upon the same evidences which prove the truth of the religion of humbler peoplethey rejoice in testimonies common to all the electWe know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the Brethren.

The humbler graces and duties are the best tests. Hypocrites mimic all public duties but the private and concealed life of true godliness they cannot counterfeit! And because they cannot do so with their enchantments we feel like the men of Egypt, that, this is the finger of God. Remember, too, that this good woman attended to home duties. She did not go down the street a 100 yards off to glorify Christ. She, I dare say, did that afterwards, but she began at home. Charity begins there and so should piety. That is the best religion which is most at home at home. Grace which smiles around the family hearth is Grace, indeed.

If your own household cannot see that you are godly, depend upon it, nobody else can! And if your parents or children have grave doubts about the sincerity of your religion, I am afraid you ought to have grave doubts about it yourself. Peters mother-in-law ministered to Christ at home and that was clear evidence of her being restored to health. And in your case it will be the best witness to your conversion if you serve Jesus in the bosom of your family and make your house the dwelling place of all that is kind and good and holy. She attended to suitable duties, duties consistent with her sex and condition. She did not try to be what God had not made her, but did what she could. She attended to natural duties, duties which suggested themselves in a moment and were not far-fetched and fanciful.

She set about doing present duties required then and there, and did not wait to serve the Lord in a years time. In a quiet natural manner she pursued her calling as if it never occurred to her to do otherwise. If somebody had thought it wonderful that she ministered to Christ, she would have been surprised at them! It seemed to her the most natural thing for her to do. Dear Soul, I dare say while lying in bed sick there were 50 things she would have liked to have donewhat housewife would not in such a case see many grievous arrears of work all around her? But Jesus being there, no sooner did she feel her health returned than she at once arose to discharge the offices of grateful hospitality as a matter of course. How could she do otherwise but wait upon Jesus and His friends?

Now, observe that those good works which prove a man to be a Christian are not such as he could boast of. He does them as a matter of course. He feels he could not do otherwise and wonders that anybody else can. Is he born of God? He yearns to teach others about the Saviorhe cannot help ithis tongue needs to be talking about Jesus! Then he begins to give of his substance to the poor. It does not strike him as being at all a remarkable or extraordinary thinghe wonders if anyone can help being generous to real need! Now he begins to enquire about the little children in the neighborhoodcan he get them into the Sunday school? Or he occupies himself with some other form of Christian work and he does it because he feels it to be inevitable for him to do soit is one of the instincts of the new Nature which God the Holy Spirit has implanted in him.

Those natural, commonplace duties which grow out of holy instincts within are the best evidence of a work of Grace! The more genuinely natural and unstrained the better. Vain is the religion which aims at unnatural conditions and makes much of distinctions of a needless kind. What is there in a peculiar garb, or affectation of speech, or separation of residence? These minister to our own vainglory! True godliness aims not at her own honor, but is content to labor among the many, to be a man among men, yet differing in nothing but character. Ours it is, as the true salt, to mingle with the massesnot to seek a proud isolation. We are men, not monks! And our Sisters are women, not nuns! All that interests men interests uswe only differ from our race by being conformed to the image of Jesus, while they wear the image of the fallen Adam.

May God grant us Grace to exhibit the Christianity of common lifethe real and practical Christianity of every day. Christianity is not with hermits in their cells, nor nuns in their convents, nor priests in their cloistersthose are all cowardly soldiers who shun the battle of life! The true faith is the joy and strength of all who love the Lord and fight His battles on the broad plains of life. True religion must be manifested in your workshops, in your houses, in the streets, in the fields, in the nursery and in the parlor. This celestial flower reveals its richest perfume, not in the conservatories of unnatural seclusion, but under the clear sky of human life, for as a flower of the field so it flourishes, where God has planted it.

One other point before leaving thisthese things become a conclusive proof of Divine Grace in the heart when they are voluntarily rendered as this good womans ministry was. I do not read that she was asked to do anything for Christ, but it suggested itself to her at once without command or request. Her work was done promptly, for, immediately she arose and did it. She no sooner had power to work than occasion was seized without delay. Promptness is the soul of obedienceI made haste and delayed not to keep Your commandments. I doubt not she did her ministering cheerfully. There is all the air of cheerfulness about the words, She arose. It reads as if with alacrity, vigor, sprightliness and eagerness she entered into the service.

That is the best service for God that is done promptly, without delay; voluntarily, without pressing; generously, without grudging; heartily, without complaining. With us it is not, This you should do, and this you must do, but we serve Jesus because we love to do so and because labor for Him is to us a joy and a delight!

II. I have thus brought before you the first point of our discourse, now notice the second one which is most interesting. This womans ministry for Christ and His disciples showed, secondly, THE PERFECTION OF HER CURE. It may not strike you for a moment, but just think about it. She was sick with a fever. Supposing a Prophet should visit your house and restore your friend from a great fever. Yet the person healed would not be able to rise from the bed for some timefever leaves extreme weakness behind and when the fever itself is entirely gone, it needs some two or three weeks, and sometimes morebefore the person who has been prostrated by it will be able to go about his daily work.

This was healing from God, indeed, a Divine work emphatically because the woman was so healed that all her weakness vanished and she was able to proceed to her work without difficulty! And, Beloved, it is our mark of a work of Grace in the soul when the converted man becomes at once a servant of Christ. The human theory of moral reformations makes time a great element in its operations. If you are to reclaim a great offender you must win him first from one vice and then from another. You must put him through a process of education by which he gradually perceives that what he has been accustomed to do is bad for himself and wakes up to the conviction that honesty and sobriety will be the best for his own profit.

Time is required by the moral reformer or he cannot develop his plans. He ridicules the idea of effecting anything in an hour or two. Man, the creature of time, must have time for the accomplishment of his very imperfect worksbut to the eternal God time is nothing! His miracles annihilate time. A man who is converted is cured at once of his sinsthe tap root of his sins is cut away then and there and though some of his sins linger, yet every one has received the stroke which will prove its deathblow. Once and for all, in a momentwhen a man believes and is born-againthe axe is laid at the root of all the evil trees within him! Sin is then and there condemned to die and what is more, all Divine Graces are in a moment implanted in the soul, not in perfectionthey will have to grow. But they are all sown in the man in a moment in embryo so that the renewed sinner, though he has only been born-again five minutes, has within him the embryo of the perfect saint who shall stand before the Throne of Godthis is one of the marvels which certify the work to be Divine.

For note, Beloved, those who have just been converted to God can worship God, can praise God, can pray to God, can love God though they were strangers to these things up to then. And some of the sweetest worship that God Himself ever hears comes from the hearts of the newly regenerate. Of all the prayers that strike the Christians ear like music, surely among the sweetest are the broken pleadings of those who have just found the Savior! I delight in the expressions of faith of elderly and full-grown Christiansthey are exceedingly instructive and precious. But, oh, that first grip of the hand, that first flash of the eye, that first tear of joy when a soul has seen Christ for the first time and stands astonished at the matchless vision of incarnate love! Why, there is no worship sweeter beneath the sun!

The woman arises at once and ministers to Christ and the sinner arises at once and begins to adore Christ. Did not I say that the newly-converted sinner can love and does love his Lord as soon as ever he is born to God? I must correct myself. He not only can and does love, but he loves beyond most others, for very seldom do mens after-love exceed in fervency the love of their espousals, which is also called their first love! This standard love is implanted in us at once, all blooming and full of perfume. Hating Christ one minute, hearts have been brought to be ravished with His love the next! The men were enemies to God an hour ago, and now they could die to defend His Gospel, so changed are their natures!

This must be a Divine work! If that which was water flood, quenching every spark of fire, should suddenly blaze and glow like Nebuchadnezzars furnace, God alone could have worked the change! Say, who has turned the waters of raging hatred into the flame of holy love? Who has done it but the mighty God Himself? If the iceberg suddenly becomes a flaming beacon, who can have worked this marvel but the Miracle Worker who alone does great wonders? Glory be to God, we often see it and He shall have the praise of it!

How pure some mens lives become at conversionpure at once, though before they were polluted with every vice! Certain sins we may have to fight with all our lives, but a renewed man usually has no difficulty whatever with the grosser sins. For instance, I have known a man habituated to blasphemy who probably never did, since he was a boy, speak a dozen sentences without an oath, and yet, after he had been converted the profane habit has never molested him. We have known some who have been troubled with a ferocious temper which made them like demons, but from the moment of conversion they have been remarkable for their singular gentleness and meekness. We have known misers instantly display the freest generosity and thieves become scrupulously honest.

Though the temptation to old sin may return, yet for the most part those who have been saved from gross vices have been the greatest loathers of the very mention or name of their former abominations. Such is the work of God in the soul, that these evils are driven out at once and sent right awayand then the man who before had been an adept in all manner of evil work becomes as much an expert in all manner of holy labor! He may not at once have picked up the technicalities of religionperhaps it would be as well he never didbut he gets to the bottom of it, the secret of it and goes to work for Jesus Christ in his own fashion and way, with wonderful wisdom and extraordinary skill from the very first!

Some of the best evangelists we have ever seen have been those who learned at once to evangelizewho seemed to have known it from the first hour in which they were converted to Godtaking to it from inward love as the young swans take to the stream. Some of the best persons who speak to others about their souls, privately, began to do so as soon as they have found the Savior! They have attained to the sacred artand a blessed art it isas though they were in a moment touched by the hand of God and inspired for the service He meant them to render.

Now, what is the practical drift of this second remark but this? As it proved the real divinity of this womans cure that she was able, immediately, to go to work for Christ, so you young converts should hold the honor of Christ in great esteem and prove the reality of His Grace in your souls by bringing forth immediate fruit to His honor. See if you cannot at once rise and minister to Him! Be as zealous as the dying thiefhe had no sooner known Christ than he confessed Him and he did the only thing he could do for his dying Lordhe rebuked the other malefactor who had reviled the Savior. Oh, if you love Jesus, do not wait till you have been 10 years a Christian! Serve Him now!

If you are healed from sin, do not wait for experiencewith your inexperience of everything except the new birth, go and seek the good of others! Do not suppose you must be trained for this war through a long process of spiritual drill, but march forward at once with all your heart and soul in the freshness of your newly-given life. It may be you will achieve greater triumphs than some of the older ones, for alas, some of them are dry and sapless and have long forgotten their early days of enthusiasm. In too many Christians the peach has lost its bloom, the flower has withered from the stemthey are not now loving and earnestthey have declined into the sere and yellow leaf of religion. Go with the dew of the morning still upon your spirit and I know not what great and gracious works the Lord may do by you!

III. Now we pass on to a third head briefly. Peters wifes mother in ministering to Christ proved HER OWN GRATITUDE. Her acts of hospitality were an exhibition of her thankfulness. Brethren, if we need to evidence our gratitude to Christ we had better do it in the same way as she did. There is no record of her having fallen at Jesus feet and saying, Blessed be Your name. She may have done sothe Bible has not room for many holy expressions, though it finds space for gracious acts.

I do not know that she sat down and sang a hymn, perhaps she did good women before her have done so and I hope they will after herbut the hymn is not recorded. Holy Scripture has not room for all the hymns which good people sing, but it finds a corner for the actions which they perform. We have the Acts of the Apostles, through we have not the devotional emotions, the hymns, or the pious resolutions of the Apostles. This good woman proved her gratitude by tangible deeds. Did she not say to herself, The Lord has served me; I will serve Him? It never strikes an awakened person that mere words are a fit return for the Grace of God. Can you give for the Lords healing fruit a handful of mere leaves from the tree of talk? It looks like mockery! Give Him the leaves, but wrap the fruit up within them! Let Him have true action and consecrated servicefor this is the fittest fruit of a grateful heart.

Observe that it is not said that she waited upon Christ before she was healed. The fevered patient is first restored and then she begins to minister. I am far from exhorting any of you to serve Christ in your lives if your inner life is not first of all renewed by Him. There must be a regenerated heart through His blessed touch, or else a renewed life may be imitated but cannot be truly possessed. First the healing, then the serving! The healing is first, but note well that the serving follows close at its heels. If you are saved, arise and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Since the light is now kindled, let it shine forth from yousince Christ has opened in your soul a well of living waterslet it flow out of the midst of you as a river of water for His service and the benefit of your fellow men.

This good soul knew to what end she had been raised up. She knew from Whom she had received the healingit was from the Lord alone. She knew from what she was restored, namely, from the very jaws of death. She knew to what she was restored, for she felt that health and strength had returned to her, and therefore she guessed rightly for what she was restored, namely, that she might wait upon the Lord. You, my Brother, are saved from Hell. You are lifted up into spiritual life and acceptance. You are ennobled and made an heir of Heaven. Why was this done but that you might minister to your Lord here and glorify Him hereafter? Our gratitude ought to teach us the Divine object of Grace and we ought to take care that it is attained.

The Lord cannot have saved us at such an expense as the death of His own Son for any reason less than that we should live unto Him! What is the reckoning of all our grateful hearts about this? Is it not this, that if we are bought with a price, we are not our own? That if the Holy Spirit has given us a new Nature it must be that we should lead a new life, and that our new life must be consecrated to Him who is the Author of it? Beloved, true gratitude always leads us to serve and it distinctly makes our healing Lord the object of our serviceit puts Him in the forefront. She arose and ministered unto them. To Him first, and to His disciples nextto the Head and for the Heads sake to all the members. To the Redeemer and because of Him to all the redeemed.

I put to each one here present who has been healed from sin and saved from spiritual death by Christ, this questionWhat are you rendering unto your Lord? What are you doing for Him? Begin with Him. Do it as unto Him. Do what you do in His Presence and present it at His dear feetthen I know you will be doing something for His people, too! His poor you will befriend. His backsliding ones you will seek to gather in. His sick ones you will visit. His comfortless ones you will console. His wandering onesas yet uncalledyou will seek after them. His lost sheep, your anxieties will go out for them. You will minister to Him and to His chosento all the members of His body.

What are you doing, Brother? What are you doing, Sister? I do not ask you now in my own name, for I am no master of yoursneither are you accountable to mebut I ask it in the name of Him whose hands were pierced for you and whose heart was opened by the soldiers spear for your redemption! Oh, what are you doing for Him? Do you love Him? If you love Him feed His lambs and His sheep. If you love, serve! And if you serve, serve Him first and serve His children and His people next, and you will prove your gratitude.

IV. But now, lastly, this womans ministering to Christ proved in the fourth place, THE CONDESCENSION OF THE PHYSICIAN. He who healed her of the fever did not need her to minister to Him! He who had power to heal diseases had certainly power to subsist without human ministry. If Christ could raise her up He must be Omnipotent and Divinewhat need, then had He of a womanly service? Might He not have used the grand style of the Old Testament, and said, If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the cattle on a thousand hills are Mine? But instead of this the mighty Master of all angels condescended to be waited upon by a poor female.

It was great condescension on Christs part that He needed ministry and great gentleness that He so often chose womans ministry. He came to earth and the first garments of His Infancy were wrapped about Him by a womans hands, and here He dwelt till at last He died and holy women bound Him up in the cerements of the tomb and laid Him in the sepulcher. Matchless marvel was this of condescension, that He who is Almighty and ever-blessed should stoop from Heaven to need the ministry of human beings! He has ministered to us by humbling Himself to accept mortal ministry! Peters wifes mother was one of the despised poor, but Jesus honored her. What was she but a fishermans wifeat any rate the mother of a fishermans wife, a poor, obscure, illiterate woman, yet Christ allowed her to wait upon Himan honor which Herodias the royal princess never had!

So the Lord today should be beloved of us for His humility in allowing us to wait upon Himin allowing me, in allowing youto do anything for His dear names sake. I do not wonder that Christ allowed Paul and Peter and John to serve Him, but that He should suffer me to do it? I am overwhelmed with astonishment at it! Do you not marvel, also? It seems easy enough to believe that the blessed Virgin and Mary Magdalene and other holy women were honored of God. But that you, dear Sister, should be allowed to take a part in His service, is not this marvelous? Will you not bless Him and minister with the utmost cheerfulness because you feel it to be so great a Grace? Is it not gracious on our Lords part to leave room in His Church for ministry?

Suppose, now, the Lord had made all His people rich? Then there would be no room for the generosity of His people to help His poor saints and you would not have the opportunity of proving your love to Him as you now can. Suppose He had converted all His elect by the secret working of His Spirit without any teaching? Then He would not have needed you in the Sunday school, nor you with your tracts, nor me with my sermonsand we should have had nothing to do for Christwe should have been sighing and crying, The good Master has not permitted us to give Him anything! Why, on our birthdays our little children love to give their father something, if it is only a bunch of flowers out of the garden, or a four-penny piece with a hole in it!

They like to do it to show their love and wise parents will be sure to let their children do such things for them. So is it with our great Father in Heaven. What are our Sunday school teaching and our preaching and all that, but these cracked four-penny pieces? Just nothing at all! But the Lord allows us to do His work for His own loves sake. His love to us finds a sweetness in our love to Him. I am most thankful that in the Church there is room for such a variety of ministries. Some Brethren are so strangely constituted that I cannot tell what they were made forbut I believe if they are Gods people there is a place for them in His spiritual temple!

A man who was accustomed to buy timber and work it up, on one occasion found a very crooked stick of wood in his bargain and said to his son as he put it aside, I cannot tell, John, whatever I shall do with it. It is the ugliest shaped piece I ever bought in my life. But it so happened, while building a barn, that he needed a timber exactly of that shape and it fitted in so thoroughly well that he said, It really seems as if that tree grew on purpose for that corner. So our gracious Lord has arranged His Church so that every crooked stick will fit in somewhere or other, if it is only a tree of His own right hand plantingHe has made it with a purpose and knows when it will answer that purpose.

How this ought to rebuke any who say, I do not see what I can do. Dear Friend, there is a peculiar work for you. Find it outand I think it will not be far offthe exercise of a little rejection will soon enable you to discover it. Be grateful that this is a certain fact, without exception, that every child of God who has been healed has some ministry which he can render to Christ and which he ought to render at once! May the Lord allow every one of you to show your gratitude in this way, and while you do it, let it always be in an adoring spirit, saying, Lord, I thank You I am allowed to go to my Sunday school class.

Do not look at your work as a burden! Say, Lord, I thank You I am permitted to do it. O God, I bless You that I am allowed to go round that little district and call at the houses. You Bible Women, bless God that He has let you be Bible Women! And you city missionaries, thank God that you are allowed to be city missionaries. Oh, says one, I can hardly do that because I suffer so much abuse and so much ill-treatment. Bless God, dear Brother, that He counts you worthy to suffer for His names sake! You know the old story of Sir Walter Raleigh. When Queen Elizabeth, one day, came to a miry place in the road, he took off his cloak for her to walk upon.

Did he regret it? No, he was delighted at it, and half the court wished for another muddy place that they might be able to do the same! Oh, you that love your Lord, be willing to lie down for Christs sake and pave the miry parts of the way by being despised for His names sake! This honor you should covet and should not shun! Arise, and minister, you healed ones! And as for you who are not healed, may you believe in Him who is able to restore you with His touch. He is mighty to save. Believe in Him and you shall live forever! Amen.

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AT YOUR WORD   
NO. 1654

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, APRIL 16, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.   
Luke 5:5.**

How very much may simple obedience partake of the sublime! Peter went to take up the net, but let it down into the sea as he said as naturally as possible, At Your word I will let down the net. He was then and there appealing to one of the grandest principles which rules among intelligent beingsand to the strongest force which sways the universeAt Your word. Great God, it is at Your Word that seraphs fly and cherubs bow! Your angels which excel in strength do Your commandments hearkening to the voice of Your word. At Your word space and time first came into existence and all things that are. At Your wordhere is the cause of causes, the beginning of the creation of God. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and by that word was the present constitution of this round world settled as it stands.

When the earth was formless and dark, Your voice, O Lord, was heard, saying, Let there be light, and, at Your word light leaped forth. At Your word day and night took up their places and, at Your word the waters were divided from the waters by the firmament of Heaven. At Your word the dry land appeared and the seas retired to their channels. At Your word the globe was mantled over with green and vegetable life began. At Your word appeared the sun and moon and stars, for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years. At Your word the living creatures filled the sea, the air, the land and man, at last, appeared. Of all this we are well assured, for by faith we know that the worlds were framed by the word of God.

Acting in conformity with the word of our Lord we feel ourselves to be in order with all the forces of the universe, traveling on the main track of all real existence. Is not this a sublime condition, even though it is seen in the common deeds of our everyday life? It is not in creation, alone, that the word of the Lord is supreme, but in Providence, too, its majestic power is manifested, for the Lord upholds all things by the word of His power! Snow and vapor and stormy wind are all fulfilling His word. His word runs very swiftly. When frost binds up the life-floods of the year, the Lord sends forth His word and melts them. Nature abides and moves by the word of the Lord.

So, too, all matters of fact and history are beneath the supreme word of God. Jehovah stands in the center of all things! As Lord of All, He abides at the saluting point, and all the events of the ages come marching by at His word, bowing to His sovereign will! At Your word, O God, kingdoms arise and empires flourish! At Your word races of men become dominant and tread down their fellows. At Your word dynasties die, kingdoms crumble, mighty cities become a wilderness and armies of men melt away like the hoarfrost of the morning. Despite the sin of man and the rage of devils, there is a sublime sense in which all thingsfrom the beginning, since Adam crossed the threshold of Eden even until nowhave happened according to the purpose and will of the Lord of Hosts. Prophecy utters her Oracles and history writes her pages, at Your word, O Lord!

It is wonderful to think of the fisherman of Galilee letting down his net in perfect consonance with all the arrangements of the ages! His net obeys the Law which regulates the spheres. His hand consciously does what Arcturus and Orion are doing without thought. This little bell on the Galilean lake rings out in harmony with the everlasting chimes! At Your word, says Peter, as he promptly obeys, therein repeating the watchword of seas and stars, of winds and worlds! It is glorious to be keeping step with the marching of the armies of the King of kings!

There is another way of working out this thought. At Your word has been the password of all good men from the beginning until now. Saints have acted upon these three words and found their marching orders in them. An ark is built on dry land and the ribald crowd gather about the hoary Patriarch, laughing at him, but he is not ashamed, for lifting his face to Heaven, he says, I have built this great vessel, O Jehovah, at Your word. Abraham quits the place of his childhood. He leaves his family and goes with Sarah to a land of which he knows nothing! Crossing the broad Euphrates and entering upon a country possessed by the Canaanite, he roams as a stranger and a sojourner all his days. He dwells in tents with Isaac and Jacob. If any scoff at him for thus renouncing the comforts of settled life, he lifts his calm face to Heaven and smilingly answers to the Lord, It is at Your word.

Yes, and even when his brow is furrowed, and the hot tears are ready to force themselves from beneath the Patriarchs eyelids as he lifts his hand with the knife to stab Isaac in the heart, if any charge him with murder, or think him mad, he lifts the same placid face towards the majesty of the Most High and says, It is at Your word. At that word he joyfully sheathes the sacrificial knife, for he has proven his willingness to go to the utmost at the word of the Lord, His God! If I were to introduce you to a thousand of the faithful ones who have shown the obedience of faith, in every case they would justify their acts by telling you that they did them at Gods word.

Moses lifts his rod in the presence of the haughty Pharaoh, at Your word, great God! Nor does he lift that rod in vain at Jehovahs word, for thick and heavy fall the plagues upon the children of Ham. They are made to know that Gods Word returns not to Him void, but fulfills His purpose, whether it is of threat or of promise! See Moses lead the people out of Egypt, the whole host in its myriads! Mark how he has brought them to the Red Sea, where the wilderness does shut them in. The heights frown on either side, and the rattle of Egypts war chariots is behind. How came Moses to so play the fool and bring them here? Were there no graves in Egypt that thus he brought them forth to die in the Red Sea? The answer of Moses is the quiet reflection that he did it at Jehovahs wordand God justifies that word, for the sea opens a wide highway for the elect of God and they march joyfully through! And with timbrels and dances on the other side they sing unto the Lord who has triumphed gloriously!

If in later days you find Joshua compassing Jericho and not assailing it with battering rams, but only with one great blast of trumpets, his reason is that God has spoken to him by His word! And so, right on, for time would fail me to speak of Samson, Jephthah and Barakthese men did what they did at Gods word and, doing it, the Lord was with them! Is it bringing things down from the sublime to the ridiculous to talk of Peter and the net which he casts over the side of his little boat? Oh, no! We are, ourselves, ridiculous when we do not make our own lives sublime by the obedience of faith. Certainly, there may be as much sublimity in casting a net as in building an ark, lifting a rod, or sounding a rams horn! And it is clear that if it is done in faith, the simplest action of life may be sublimely great! The flash of the wave, as it covers Peters net may be as sublime before the Lord as the Glory of the Red Sea billow when it returned in its strength.

God, who sees a world in a drop, sees wonders in the smallest act of faith. Do not, I pray you, think that sublimity lies in masses, to be measured by a scale, so that a mile shall be sublime and an inch shall be absurd! We measure not morals and spirituals by rods and chains! The common act of fishing at Christs word links Peter with all the principalities, powers and forces which in all ages have known this as their only LawHe spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. We, too, shall have fellowship with the sublime if we know how to be perfectly obedient to the Word of the Lord! This ought to be the rule of all Christians for the whole of their livesAt Your word. This should direct us in the Church and in the world. It should guide us in our spiritual beliefs and in our secular acts! At Your word.

I wish it were so. We hear boasts that the Bible and the Bible, alone, is the religion of Protestants. It is a mere boast. Few Protestants can honestly repeat the assertion. They have other books to which they pay deference! They have other rules, other guides, beyond and above, and even in opposition to the one Word of God! It ought not to be so. The power of the Church and the power of the individual to please God shall never be fully known till we get back to the simple, yet sublime rule of our text, At Your word. I am going to hammer upon that phrase, this morning, as God shall help meAt Your word. This rule has many applications. First, I shall somewhat repeat myself by saying that it ought to apply to the affairs of ordinary life. Secondly, it should apply to matters of spiritual profiting. And thirdly, and here I shall enlarge, it ought to find its chief application in our great life businessbeing fishers of men.

I. At Your word should apply TO ALL THE AFFAIRS OF ORDINARY LIFE. I mean, first, as to continuance in honest industry. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Many a man, in the present trying crisis, is half ready to throw up his work and run away from his business because he has toiled all night and taken nothing. Truly, the financial darkness has lasted long and does not yet yield to the dawn, but yet Christians must not murmur or leave their posts. Oh tried ones, continue to be diligent in your business, still provide things honest in the sight of all men. Labor on in hope! Say as Peter did, Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.

Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. You know that Truth of God full well! Know this, also, that the Lord will not forsake His people! Your best endeavors will not, of themselves, bring you prosperity. Still, do not relax those endeavors. Gods Word to you is to quit yourselves like men, be strong, gird up the loins of yours mind, be sober, and stand fast. Throw not away your shield, cast not away your confidence, but stand steadily in your rank till the tide of battle turns! God has placed you where you aremove not till His Providence calls you! Do not run before the cloud. Take down the shutters tomorrow morning and display your goods! Let not despondency drive you to anything that is rash or unseemly. Say, Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.

If I am speaking to those who are out of work just now, searching for some place where they can provide bread for themselves and for their families, as is their duty, let them hear and ponder! If any man does not do his best to provide for his own household, he comes not under a Gospel blessing, but he is said to be worse than a heathen and a publicanit is the duty of us all to labor with our hands for that which is goodthat we may have to give to the needy as well as to those dependent on us. If, after having gone about this city till your feet are blistered, you can find nothing to do, do not sit at home next Monday sulkily saying, I will not try again. Apply my text to this painful trial and yet, again, sally forth in hope, saying with Peter, We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.

Let men see that a Christian is not readily driven to despair! No, let them see that when the yoke is made more heavy, the Lord has a secret way of strengthening the backs of His children to bear their burdens. If the Holy Spirit shall make you calmly resolute, you will honor God much more by your happy perseverance than the talkative by their fine speeches, or the formalist by their outward show. Common life is the true place in which to prove the truth of godliness and bring Glory to God! Not by doing extraordinary works, but by the piety of ordinary life, is the Christian known and his religion honored. At Gods Word, hold on, even to the end. Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.

It may be, too, that you have been endeavoring in your daily life to acquire skill in your business and you have not succeeded, or you have tried to acquire more knowledge, so that you could better fulfill your vocation, but up to now you have not prospered as you wish. Do not, therefore, cease from your efforts! Christians must never be idlers. Our Lord Jesus would never have it said that His disciples are a sort of cowards who, if they do not succeed the first time, will never try again! We are to be patterns of all the moral virtues as well as of the spiritual graces! Therefore, at the bidding of the Lord, work on with mind and hand and look to Him for the blessing. At His word let down the net once moreHe may intend to bless you largely when, by trial, you have been prepared to bear the benediction.

This will apply very closely to those who are laboring hard in the training of children. It may be that with your own children you may not have succeeded yetthe boys spirit may still be wild and proudand the girl may not yet have yielded to obedience and submission. Or you may be working in the Sunday school, or in the Day school, trying to impart knowledge and to fashion the youthful minds arightand you may have been baffled. But if it is your business to teach, do not be overcome! Stand to your work as though you heard Jesus say, Whatever you do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men. Earnestly, then, at His word, let down the net! I counsel you, dear Friends, in everything to which you set your hands, if it is a good thing, do it with all your might! And if it is

not a good thing, have nothing to do with it!

It may be possible that you are called to teach the age some moral Truths of God. In most generations, individuals have been called to carry out reforms and to promote progress. You are bound to love your neighbor as yourself; therefore, as you have opportunity, do good unto all men. If you have tried, and up to now have not won a hearing, do not give up your pointif it is a good thing and you are a Christian man, never let it be said that you were afraid or ashamed. I admire in Palissy, the potter, not only his Christianity, which could not be overcome by persecution, but his perseverance in his own business of making pottery. His last farthing and his last breath would have gone in discovering a glaze, or bringing out a color! I love to see such men Believers. I should not like to see our Lord followed by a set of cowards who could not fight the common battles of lifehow should such as these become worthy of the lordlier chivalry which wrestles with spiritual wickedness in high places? It is for us to be bravest among the brave in the plains of common life, that when we are summoned to higher fields, where still greater deeds are needed, we may go there trained for the higher service!

Does it seem to you to be a little out of place to be talking thus from the pulpit? I do not think so. I notice how, in the Old Testament, we are told of the sheep and the cattle and the fields and the harvests of good men and these had to do with their religion. I notice how the prudent woman, according to Solomon, looked well to her household. And I observe that we have in the Bible, a book of Proverbs, and another called Ecclesiastes, with little spiritual teaching in them, but a great deal of good, sound, practical common sense! It is evident to me that the Lord intends that our faith should not be penned up in a pew, but should walk the shop and be seen in every walk of life! The great principle of my text fell from the lips of a working manand to the working man I return it!

It was connected with a net and a boatthe implements of Peters laborand with these common things I would link it. And I would say to all who serve the Lord in this present evil worldin the name of God, if you have anything to do, be not so desponding and despairing as to cease from it, but, according to His word, once more go forward in your honest endeavors, and, like Peter, sayI will let down the net. This may prove a word in season to some who are weary of the hardness of the times. I shall rejoice if it nerves an arm or cheers a heart. Have faith in God, my tried Brothers and Sisters. Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

II. IN MATTERS OF SPIRITUAL PROFITING we must, at the word of Christ, let down the net again. I put this, first, to those who have been up to this Tabernacle a great many times, heartily, if I am to believe them, hoping to find salvation. You have prayed before the sermon began that the Lord would really bless the sermon to you. Now, mark, I do not understand you at all! I cannot make you out because the way of salvation is open to you at this very moment and it is, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. You have nothing to wait forall your waiting is sinful! If you say you are waiting for the stirring of the pool, I tell you there is no pool to be stirred and no angel to stir it! That pool was dried up long ago and angels never go that way now.

Our Lord Jesus Christ shut up Bethesda, when He came, and said to the man lying there, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. That is what He says to you! You have no business waitingbut as you are, and are here this morning, I would earnestly invite you, at the word of Christ, who has bid us preach the Gospel to every creaturebelieve and live. Let down the net once more and let it down this waysay, My Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief. Breathe a prayer to Jesus that He would accept you. Submit yourself to Him and beseech Him to become, now, at this very moment, your Savior. You will be heard! Plenty of fish are waiting to be taken in the net of faith. At the Lords word, let it down!

But I will now speak to others present who have been letting down their nets, in vain, perhaps, in the form of importunate prayer. Have you been praying for the conversion of a relative, or pleading for some other good thing which you believe to be according to the will of God? And, after long pleadingpleading into the night, for your spirit has been sadare you tempted never to offer that petition again? Now then, at Christs Word, who said that men ought always to pray and not to faintat Christs Word, who says, Pray without ceasinglet down the net and pray again! Not because the circumstances which surround you are more favorable, but simply because Jesus bids you, continue in prayer! And who knows but that this very time you will meet with success!

Or have you been searching the Scriptures to find a promise which will suit your case? Do you want to get hold of some good Word from God that will cheer you? Shoals of such fish are around your boat! The sea of Scripture is full of themfish of promise, I meanbut, alas, you cannot catch one of them. Nevertheless, try again. Go home this afternoon and search the Scriptures again with prayer! Beseech the Holy Spirit to apply a precious portion to your heart, that you may, by faith, enjoy the sweetness of itand who knows but you shall, this very day, obtain your desire and receive a larger blessing than your mind can fully containso that in your case, also, the net shall break through the fullness of the favor!

Or it may be you have been laboring a long while after some holy attainment. You need to conquer a besetting sin, to exercise firmer faith, to exhibit more zeal and to be more useful, but you have not yet gained your desire. Now, then, since it is the Lords mind that you should be perfect in every good work to do His will, do not cease from your purpose, but, at His Word, let down your net again! Never despair. That temper of yours will be conquered yet! That unbelief of yours will give way to holy faith! Let down the net and all the Divine Graces may yet be taken in it, to be yours for the rest of yours life! At Christs Word still labor for the best things and He will give them to you.

Or are you seeking, just now, the closer Presence of Christ and a nearer fellowship with Him? Are you yearning after a sight of His facethat face which outshines the morning? Do you wish to be brought into His banqueting house to be satiated with His love? And have you cried in vain? Then cry once more, at His Word, for He bids you come to Him! His loving voice invites you to draw near. At His Word press forward, once againlet down the net once moreand joys unspeakable await you, surpassing all you have ever experienced! Thus you see that there is a just application of the great principle of the text to our spiritual profiting. God help us, by His gracious Spirit, to carry it out from day to day!

III. The great principle of our text should be applied to OUR LIFE BUSINESS. And what is the life business of every Christian here? Is it not soulwinning? That we may glorify God by the bringing of others to the faith of Christ is the great objective of our remaining here on earthotherwise we would have been caught up to swell the harmony of the heavenly songs. It is expedient for many wandering sheep here below that we should tarry here till we have brought them home to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Our way of winning men for Christ, or, to use His own metaphor our method of catching menis by letting down the net of the Gospel.

We have learned no other way of holy fishing! Men with great zeal and little knowledge are inventing ingenious methods for catching men, but, for my part, I believe in nothing but letting down the Gospel netby telling out the story of the love of God to men in Christ Jesus. No new Gospel has been committed to us by Jesus and He has authorized no new way of making it known! Our Lord has called all of us to the work of proclaiming free pardon through His blood to all who believe in Him. Each Believer has a warrant to seek the conversion of his fellow men. May not every man seek to save his brother from the burning? Must not Jesus smile on any mans endeavor to deliver his neighbor from going down to eternal death? Has He not said, Let him that hears say, Come? Whoever hears the Gospel is to invite others to come to Christ!

The Word of the Lord is our warrant for keeping to our one work of making known the Gospelit would be a sorry act of mutiny if we were either to be silent, or to preach another Gospel which is not another! The Word of the Lord is a warrant which justifies the man who obeys it. Where the word of a king is, there is power. What higher authority can we need? Oh, but, they say, you ought to advance to something higher than the mere elementary Doctrines of Grace, and give the people something more in keeping with the progress of the period. We shall not do so while Jesus bids us go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature! If we do what He bids us, the responsibility of the matter rests no longer with us. Whatever comes of it, we are clear if we have obeyed orders. A servant is not to justify his masters message, but to deliver it. This makes it a joy to preach, this doing it, at Your Word. Our business is to do what Christ tells us, as Christ tells usand to do this again and again so long as we have breath in our bodies!

The commanding Word cries always to us, Preach the Gospel, preach the Gospel to every creature! Our justification for setting forth Christ Crucified and incessantly bidding men believe and live, lies in that same Word which bade Peter walk the sea, and bade Moses fetch water out of a rock! The result of this preaching will justify Him who commanded it! No man, at the last, will be able to say to the Savior, You gave Your servants an impossible task and You gave them an instrument to wield which was not at all adapted to produce its end. No, but at the closing of all things, it shall be seen that for the salvation of the elect there was nothing better than a crucified Saviorand to make that crucified Savior known there was no better means than the simple proclamation of His Word by honest lips in the power of the Spirit of the Lord. The foolishness of preaching will turn out to be the great proof of the Wisdom of God!

Brothers, you that teach in the school, or you that preach from the pulpit, or distribute tracts, or speak personally to individualsyou need not be afraid but what Wisdom will exonerate herself from all charges and vindicate her own methods! You may be called a fool, today, for preaching the Gospel, but that accusation, like rust on a sword, will wear off as you use the weapon in the wars of the Lord! The preaching of the Word of God soon puts down all clamors against itself those clamors mainly arise because it is not preached. No one calls the Gospel ineffective where it is smiting right and left like a great two-handed sword! Our reply to the outcry about the failure of the pulpit is to get into it and preach with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven!

Indeed, this Word of Christ, whereby He gives us His warrant for letting down the net, is such that it amounts to a command, and it will leave us guilty if we do not obey. Suppose Simon Peter had said, We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; and therefore, notwithstanding Your word, I will not let down the net? Then Simon Peter had been guilty of disobedience to His Lord and blasphemy against the Son of God! What shall I say to any of my fellow Christians who profess to be called of God, and to be Christs disciples, and yet never let down the net? Is it so that you are doing nothing for the Truth of God? That you never disseminate the Gospel? Is it so that you call yourselves lights of the world, and yet never shine? That you are sowers of the seed and yet forget that you have a seed basket? Am I addressing any members of this Church who are, in this respect, wasting their lives? Is it so that it is professedly your lifes objective to be fishers of men and yet you have never cast a net, nor even helped to draw one on shore?

Are you dwelling among us under false pretences? Are you mocking God by a fruitless profession which you never try to make fruitful? I have not the strength with which to condemn you, but I would to God your own conscience might fulfill that office! What shall be said of the man to whom the Lord gives charge that he shall make known the glad tidings of salvation from eternal miseryand yet he is sinfully silent? The great Physician has entrusted you with the medicine which heals the sickyou see them die about you but never speak of the remedy? The great King has given you the meal with which to feed the hungry and you lock the storehouse door, while the crowds are starving in your streets? Is not this a crime which may well make a man of God weep over you? This great London of ours is growing heathenish to the very core and yet our Lord has given the Gospel into the hands of His Churcheswhat can be the reason for the indifference of the godly?

If we keep this Gospel to ourselves, coming ages will condemn us as cruel to our posterity. Succeeding generations will point to our era and say, What sort of men were these, that had the Light of God and shut it up in a dark lantern? In a century to come, when others shall stand in this city and walk these streets, they will say, A curse upon the memory of the ministers and people who failed in their duty! They came to the kingdom in a solemn time but never realized their calling and so missed the end and objective of their being! May we be spared from such a calamity as this! Yes, we have a warrant for laboring to spread the Truth of God, and more than a warrantwe have a statute from the Throne of Goda peremptory command and it is woe to us if we preach not the Gospel!

Now, Brothers, this warrant from Christ is one which, if we are in the state of heart of Simon Peter, will be omnipotent with us this morning. It was very powerful with Simon Peter. For, observe, he was under the influence of a great disappointment, yet he let down the net. We have toiled all the night. Some say, We have had all this Gospel preaching, we have had all these revivals, all these stirs and nothing has come of it. When was that? I hear a good deal of this talk, but what are the facts? Oh, you say, you know we have had a great deal of revival a little while ago. I do not know anything of the sort! We have had flashes of light here and there, but comparatively so little that it is a pity to make so much of it.

Moreover, considering the little that has ever been done for it, the spread of the Gospel has been marvelous! Look at Gospel work at the present moment in India! People say that the Christian faith is not spreading. I say that it is spreading wonderfully as compared with the labor expended and the sacrifice made! If in that land you spend a penny and get a thousand pounds, you have no right to say, What is that? We want a million. If your desires are thus exacting, prove their sincerity by corresponding action! Increase your outlay! The harvest is wonderful, considering the little seed, but if you wish for more sheaves, sow more! The Church has had an enormous return for what little she has done. In England there have been partial revivals, but to what have they amounted? A flash of light has been seen in a certain district, but darkness has still remained supreme over the length and breadth of the country!

The papers have reported a great work in a certain spot, but if the papers had reported the places wherein there has been no revival, we should have had a different view of things! A little corner at the top of a column would have sufficed for the goodand column after column would not have sufficed to make known the black side of the situation! The fact is, the Church has scarcely ever been in a state of universal revival since the day of Pentecost! There has been a partial moving among Christians every now and then, but the whole mass throughout has never burned and flamed with the earnestness which the grand cause demands. Oh, that the Lord would set the whole Church on fire! We have no cause, whatever, for disappointment. In proportion to the little effort put out, great things have come to ustherefore let us get to our nets and say no more about the night in which we have toiled!

But next, this command in Peter overcame his love of ease. Evidently he was tired when he said, We have toiled all the night. Fishing is hard work, especially when no fish are caught. It is natural to wish to be excused from further toil when you are already weary with unrewarded labor. I have heard some Christians say, You know I had my time in the Sunday school, years ago, but then I worked too much for my strength. No doubt their efforts were stupendous in the remote ages of their youthful zealwe can hardly imagine what they must have been likefor no relic remains to assist our conceptions! At this time they feel authorized to take things easy, for they owe no more to their Lord, or, at least they do not intend to pay any more!

Is it so that any one of us can cease from service when it is plain that we do not cease from receiving mercy at the Lords hands? Are we not ashamed of the case when it is plainly put? Take it easy. Yes, soon, very soon, we shall take it easy, for there will be rest enough in the grave! Just now, while souls of men are perishing, to relax our efforts is wickedness. No, no, Peter! Although you may be, now, in a dripping sweat through having toiled all night, you must get at it again! He does so. The nights work is nothing, he must work in the day, too, if he is to catch fish! Moreover, the command of Christ was so supreme over Peter that he was not held back by carnal reason, for reason would say, If you could not catch fish in the night, you will certainly not do so in the day.

Night was the special time for taking fish on the Gennesaret lake, and by day, when the garish sun was lighting up the waves and letting the fish see every single mesh of the net, they were not likely to come into it. But when Christ commands, the most unlikely time is likely and the most unpromising sphere becomes hopeful! No act is out of season when Christ commands it! If He says, go, go at once, without deliberation. Say not, There are yet four months and then comes harvest. The fields are white already to the harvest. Peter lets down the net at once and wisely does he act at Christs word. The lesson to you and to me is thisLet us do as Peter did and let down the net personally, for the Apostle said, I will let down the net.

Brother, cannot you do something, yourself, with your own heart, lips and hands? Sister, cannot you do something, yourself, with your own gentle spirit? I was thinking about getting half a dozen friends to form a committee to relieve the poor around us. Nothing will ever come of it! The poor will not get a basin of soup or a loaf of bread. Set about it yourself! But I think I might get a dozen to come together and organize a Society. Yes, and then more resolutions and amendments all day longand finish up with passing votes of mutual approbation! You had better get to work, yourself, as Peter did. And you had better do it at once, for Peter immediately let down the net, as soon as he had launched out into the deep. You may never have another opportunityyour zeal may have evaporated, or your life may be over!

Peter, however, only let down one net, and there was the pity of it. If John and James and all the rest had let down their nets, the result would have been much better. Why? you ask. Because, through there being only one net, that net was overstrained and broke. If all the nets had been used, they might have taken more fish, and no net would have been broken. I was reading, some time ago, of a take of mackerel at Brighton. When the net was full, the mackerel sticking in all the meshes made it so heavy that the fishermen could not raise itand the boat, itself, was in some danger of going downso they had to cut away the net and lose the fish. Had there been many nets and boats, they might have buoyed up the whole of the fishand so they might have done in this case. As it was, many fish were lost through the breaking of the net.

If a Church can be so awakened that each individual gets to work in the power of the Holy Spirit, and all the individuals combine, then how many souls will be captured for Jesus! Multitudes of souls are lost to the blessed Gospel because of our broken netsand the net gets broken because we are not well united in the holy serviceby our lack of wisdom, we cause loss to our Masters cause. Ministers need not become worn out with labor if all would take their share! One boat would not begin to sink if the other boats took a part of the blessed load.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I close by saying that if I have accomplished anything, this morning, by the help of Gods Spirit, I hope I have made you ready to accept the following directory of service drawn from the text. The way in which to serve God is to do it at His Word. I pray that none of us may sink into serving the Lord as a matter of routine. May we never fall to serving Him in our own strength. We must preach, teach and labor in His name because we hear Him bidding us do it! We must act at His Word. If this were the case, we should work with much more faith, with much more earnestness and with much more likelihood of success. It is a blessed thing to see Christ sitting in the boat while you cast out the net. If you catch a glimpse of His approving smile, as He watches you, you will work right heartily.

We must labor in entire dependence upon Him. We must not preach or teach because, in our judgment, it is the right thing to doPeter did not think sobut because Jesus gives the word, and His Word is Law. You may not work because you have any expectation of success from the excellence of yours work, or from the nature of the people among whom you labor, but because Jesus has given you the Command. You stand there doing a thing which critics sneer at as absurd, but you do it in all confidence, believing that it must be wise because Jesus bids you do it. I remember well how some of our Brothers used to talk to us. They said, You preach the Gospel to dead sinners! You bid them repent and believe! You might just as well shake a pocket handkerchief over a grave and bid the corpse come out of it.

Exactly so! They spoke the truth! But I would be delighted to go and shake a pocket handkerchief over graves and bid the dead live if Jesus bade me do so! I would expect to see the cemetery crack and heave from end to end if I were sent on such an errand by the Lord! I would accept the duty joyfully! The more absurd the wise men of our age make the Gospel out to beand the more they show that it is powerless to produce the designed endthe more will we persevere in our old method of preaching Jesus Crucified! Our resolves are not to be shaken by that mode of reasoning. We never drew our argument for preaching the Gospel from the work, itself, but from the orders given us to do it!

We would rather be acting upon the responsibility of Christ than upon our own. I would rather be a fool and do what Christ tells me than be the wisest man of the modern school and despise the Word of the Lord. I would rather lay the responsibility of my life at the feet of Him who bids me live according to His Word than seek out an objective in life for myself and feel that the responsibility rested on my own shoulders. Let us be willing to be under orders to Christ; willing to persevere under difficulties; willing to begin anew in His service from this very hour. Amen.

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NEVERTHELESS AT YOUR WORD   
NO. 2810

A SERMON   
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, DECEMBER 21, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, JUNE 3, 1877.

**Nevertheless at Your word.   
Luke 5:5.**

OUR Lord Jesus Christ had preached a sermon to the multitude while He was sitting down in Peters boat. And after the people had gone, He had a private message for Simon. He said to him, Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. Christs discourses to the general public were all full of most blessed teaching, but His little private talks to His intimate acquaintances were even more helpful and precious. They were important Truths of God which He proclaimed to the many, but the choicest things He reserved for the few. Many a parable which He addressed to the crowd, He explained only to His own disciplesand many a thing which He never said to the crowd at all, because they could not understand it, and it would have been like casting pearls before swine, He whispered in the ears of His disciples. So it was with Simon Peter at this time. First there was the sermon to the many and after the sermon, this word to Peter about launching out into the deep. Mind that you, who love the Lord, always look for the private piece after the public sermon. Watch for the sweet Word which your Master is always willing to utterand do not be satisfied unless you hear it.

Then, if the message that He gives you shall be a precept, or a command, like that addressed to Simon, bidding him let down his nets, be careful that you obey it at once. Be not negligent of the special voice of God in your own heart and conscience, for God intends thereby to bestow a great blessing upon you, even as He did upon Simon whose boat was filled with fish almost to sinking! If you give heed to that special private word of your Lord to your own heart and soul, you shall have many a boatful of fish, or rather, many a heart-full of untold blessing which otherwise you might never have received.

Peter, being exhorted to launch out into the deep and to let down his nets for a catch, reasoned that, according to the ordinary course of events, it would be of very little use to do so, for he and his comrades had been toiling hard with their great nets all through the night, yet they had caught nothing and it did not, therefore, seem probable that they would catch anything now. However, feeling that Christ was his Master and Lord, and that it did not become him to raise any question about the matter, he just stated the facts of the case and then added, cheerfully, Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.

Those four words, Nevertheless at Your word, seem to furnish me with a topic upon which I shall try to speak thusFirst, the word of Christ is our supreme rule. At Your word. Secondly, the word of Christ is our sufficient warrant. If we have that at our back, we may well say, Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net. And, thirdly, to keep that word will always ensure a reward.

I. First, then, THE WORD OF CHRIST IS THE SUPREME RULE OF THE CHRISTIAN.   
Time out of mind have we spoken to you about the precious blood of Christ that cleanses all sin and about the blessings that Jesus brings to you when He becomes your Savior. But we are also bound to remind all of you who profess to have believed on Him, and to have become His disciples, that you must not only acknowledge Him as your Master and Lord, but that you must do whatever He bids you   
*Faith must obey the Saviors will,   
As well as trust His Grace.*

The moment we become Christians, who are saved by Christ, we become His servants to obey all His commandments. Hence, it is incumbent upon us to search the Scriptures, that we may know what our Masters will is. There He has written it out for us in plain letters and it is an act of disobedience to neglect this search. By refusing to learn what the will of our Lord is, the sin of ignorance becomes willful because we do not use the means by which we might receive instruction. Every servant of Christ is bound to know what he or she is to do and then, when he knows it, he should at once do it. The Christians business is, first, to learn Christs will and, secondly, to do it! Once learned, that will is the supreme law of the Christian whatever may seem to oppose it.

Let me just mention a few of the times when it seems difficult to conform to that will, but when we must say, Nevertheless at Your word.   
And, first, we must do this with regard to great Gospel Truths when our own reason is staggered. No thoughtful person can seriously consider the Doctrines of Grace without often crying out, They are high! I cannot attain to them. There are many things revealed to us in the Scriptures which we cannot understandno, not even though we give all our mind to endeavor to comprehend them. There are difficulties in theology. This doctrine does not appear to square with that, or that one with the next. One Truth, perhaps, appears inconsistent with the love of God, or we may, sometimes, wonder how certain events in Gods Providential dealings can be consistent with His goodness or justice. Well, my Brothers and Sisters, whenever you put your hand to your brow and say, concerning anything revealed in the Scriptures, I cannot comprehend it, lay your other hand upon your heart and say, Nevertheless I believe it. It is clearly taught in the Bible and although my reason may find it difficult to explain it, and I may not be able to discover any arguments to prove the truth of it, yet I lay my reason down at my Infallible Masters feet and trust where I cannot see. For a man to take his creed blindly from a pope or a priest is to degrade himself because he receives that teaching from his fellow manbut for him to lay his whole mind down at the feet of Jesus Christ is no degradation since Christ is the Wisdom of God, and all wisdom is Infallibly gathered up in Him. I do not expect to fully understand my Lords willI only ask to be informed what that will is. I do not suppose that I can comprehend it, but I say, What is Your will, my Master? If You will reveal it to me, I will believe it.   
We must adopt a similar course when we are exposed to the quibbles of our fellow men. Many young persons, especially, find themselves unable to answer all the objections that are raised by those who oppose the Gospel. It would be a marvel if they could, for the old proverb says, One fool can ask more questions than 50 wise men can answer. It is not likely that those who are just beginning to learn Divine Truths could be able to overcome all its opponents. When a question has sometimes staggered me, I have felt, Well, I cannot answer that, but I believe that it can be answered. I thank God that I have heard it asked, for it has taught me my ignorance upon that pointand I will sit down and study Gods Word till I

can answer itbut even if I cannot answer it, it does not matter. Somebody can do so and, above all, God Himself can! Be it mine, sometimes, to leave the arrows of the adversary sticking in my shieldthey will do no harm there. If he likes to see them there, let him be amused by it, but as long as I cling to Christs Infallible teaching, they will not hurt me. So let him shoot and shoot again. You will find, Beloved, that this will be good exercise for your humility and good exercise for your loyalty to Christ. It will be shown that you are, after all, a follower of Christnot a believer in your own infallibility, or relying upon that reason of yours which, at best, is but a dim candle. It will be shown, I saythat you have really yielded up your mind to the lordship of your Savior.   
Sometimes we shall have to say, Nevertheless at Your word, when the command of Christ seems contrary to our own experience. It would become a dangerous thing if we were always to follow the experience even of Christians, for the experience of one man might teach us one thing, but the experience of another might teach us the very reverse. And to make experience the basis of theologythough it is often a helpful illustration of it, would lead to great mistake. I must never say, I did suchand-such a thingI know it was not right, yet good came of it and, therefore, I feel that I may do the same thing again. Neither ought I to say, I did such-and-such, which I knew was right, but I suffered great trouble as the result of it and, therefore, I ought not to do it again. No, no! Whatever happens to us, our only course is to pursue the right path and to avoid all that is wrong. Let each of us say, My Master, if any act of obedience to You were to cost me many a privilegecost me my liberty cause me to be put into prison (and it has done so to many of the saints of old) yet I will do as You command me, whatever the consequences may be.   
What said Master John Bunyan, after he had lain in prison many years simply for preaching the Gospel? The magistrates said to him, John, we will let you out, but you must promise not to preach again. There are the regular divines of the countrywhat have you, as a tinker, to do with preaching? John Bunyan did not say, Well, now, I can see that this preaching is a bad thing. It has got me into prison and I have had hard work to tag enough laces to keep my wife and that poor blind child of mine. I had better get out of this place and stick to my tinkering. No, he did not talk like that. He said to the magistrates, If you let me out of prison today, I will preach again tomorrow, by the Grace of God. And when they told him that they would not let him out unless he promised not to preach, he bravely answered, If I lie in jail till the moss grows on my eyelids, I will never conceal the Truth which God has taught me.   
We are, therefore, not to put our own past experience in the way of obedience to our Lords will, but to say to Him, Nevertheless, however costly this duty may prove to be, at Your command I will let down the net, or do whatever You bid me do. But, sometimes, people get remarkably wise through experience, or they think that they do. Old sailors, for instance, fancy that they know a thing or two. And Simon Peter, who had been fishing in that lake for a long while, thought he knew all that could be known about fishing. And Christ interfered with Peter just in Peters own line and gave him a command about fishing! The fisherman might have said, What is the good of casting the net? We have been fishing all night long and have taken nothing! What is the good of our fishing anymore? Peter did not talk so, though he may have thought like that, but he said, Nevertheless at Your word, since You know far more about fish than I dosince You did make them and can make them come wherever You will. Since, Lord, You command itI would not do it at anybody elses bidding, but I will do it at YoursI will let down the net. So, sometimes, there may be something in Gods Word, or some path of duty clearly indicated to you which does not seem, to carnal judgment, to be very wise, but you are to say, Nevertheless at Your wordno other authority could make me do itbut Your Law is the supreme rule for my conduct and I will do whatever You bid me.   
This great principle ought also to prevail when self-love is in the way. Sometimes the command of Christ runs completely contrary to what we would like and obedience to it involves self-denial. It threatens to take away from us much that was very pleasurable to us and then, very likely, something within us says, Do not obey it. It will go very hard with you if you do. Nevertheless, Brothers and Sisters, may the Holy Spirit so mightily work upon you that you will do anything and everything that Christ commands, however galling to the flesh it may be! We are not our own, so let us never act as if we were. The mark of the precious blood of Jesus is upon uswe have been bought with itso it is not right for us to make provision for the flesh, or to be looking out for our own ease or aggrandizement. It is our duty to do whatever our Lord bids us do and to take the consequences, whatever they may be. So let us, each one, say, I know that it will cost me much, my Master, but, nevertheless, I will do whatever You command me.   
Sometimes, there is a still more powerful opposition to the will of the Lordthat is, when love of others would hinder us from obeying it. If I do such-and-such, which I know I ought to do, I shall grieve my parents. If I carry out that command of Christ, the dearest friend I have will be very angry with me. He has threatened to cast me off if I am baptized. My old companions, who have been very kind to me, will all consider that I have gone out of my mind and will no longer wish to have me in their company. If a person has a genial heart and a loving spirit, this kind of treatment is very trying and there is a strong temptation to say, Well, now, how far can I go in religion and yet manage to save these fond connections? I do not wish to set myself up in opposition to everybody else cant I, somehow or other, please God and yet please these people too? But, Brothers and Sisters, if we are indeed Christians, the supreme rule of our Lords will drives us to say to Him, Nevertheless, I will do whatever You command. Farewell, our best-beloved, if they stand in the way of Christ our Lord, for He said, He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. Everyone else and everything else must go that we may keep company with Christ!   
It sometimes happens that we have Gods Word pointing us to a certain course of action, but we do not follow it because of the faintness of our own heart. Do you ever feel faint-hearted? There are some people who seem as if they were born without nerves, or feelings, for they never appear to be downcast. But some of us, at times, shrink away and seem to be dried up, as if the marrow were gone from our bones and the strength from our hearts. At such a time as that we know what Christ would have us do, but we hesitate to do it. We feel as if we could notnot that we would not, but that we really could not. There is a lack of couragea lack of confidence. We are timid and cannot dash into the fray. Then is the timewhen heart and flesh failfor us to take God to be the strength of our soul by resolving, let our weakness be what it may, that we will obey the command of Christ! When your heart is faint, dear Brother or Sister, still follow Christ. When you feel as if you must die at your next step, still keep close at His heels and if your soul is almost in despair, yet hold on to Him and keep your feet in His ways. If anyone who fears the Lord still walks in darkness and has no Light of God, let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God, for so shall His Light break forth as the morning and his heart shall be once more glad in the Lord.   
So you see, whatever obstacle there may be in the way of our obedience to the command of Christ, still let each one of us say to Him, Nevertheless at Your word, I will do whatever You command. That shall be the supreme rule and guide for all my actions.   
II. Now, secondly, I want to show you that THE WORD OF CHRIST IS OUR SUFFICIENT WARRANT, as well as our supreme rule.   
This is, first, our warrant for believing on Him. If the Lord Jesus Christ has bid you do this, you certainly may do it! And if any shall ask you why you believe on Him, this shall be your triumphant answer, The King gave me the command to do so. Listen to this, all you who desire to have eternal life and who have not yet obtained it! The Gospel commission is, Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And this is the Gospel command, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. The poor timid soul says, How can I venture to trust my guilty soul with Christ? It would be presumption upon my part. What right have I to come and rely upon Him? It must be right for you to do it, for He bids you do it! And if He bids you do it, this is warrant enough for you! Every sinner under Heaven who hears the glad tidings of salvation is commanded to believe on Jesusand he is warned that if he does not believe on Himhe shall be damned! God now commands all men everywhere to repent. This is the very widest form of command, so I bid each one of you to say, this very moment, Lord, I am not worthy to be Your disciple, but, nevertheless, at Your command, I will believe in You. I feel that it will be a wonder of Grace if I am saved and it is almost incredible that it should ever take placenevertheless, at Your command, I let down my net. I even dare to trust Your precious blood and Your spotless righteousness and to expect that You will save me. Is not that a blessed form of argument? I pray that some of you may feel its force and act upon it even now!

Next, this is an excellent reason for being baptized if you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Somebody may say to you, What is the good of Baptism? It will not save youto be immersed in water will not wash away your sins. I hope you will be ready to reply, Yes, I know all that. Nevertheless, at Christs command, I mean to do it. I ask not what will be the gain to me of obeying His orders. That would be sheer selfishness He bids me be baptized and that is enough for me. But such-and-such a church does not practice the Baptism of Believers, or Baptism by immersion. No, but Christ has ordained it! By His own example, by His plain precept, by the preaching and practice of His Apostles, He has revealed His will to us and, therefore, it is for us to obey that will! If any shall accuse us of making too much of the Baptism of Believers, we reply, Our Lord has said, He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, and we have no more right to leave out one portion of His words than the other. So, at His command we do thislet men say what they will.   
This, Beloved, is also the great argument for our taking up the position which we hold as Dissenters. Is it not a bad thing to dissent from other people! Yes, of course it is, if they are right and we are wrong, but it is just as bad for them to dissent from us if we are right and they are wrong! I am not to say, I will be singular and keep myself separate from other people. It would be wrong for me to act like that. But it is right to say, Whatever Christ commands is Law in His Church. What synods command, or bishops command, or popes command is not worth the paper it is written onthere is no authority in it to a Christian. He is free from all such control as that. But the Law of Christ, as he finds it revealed in the Bible, is binding upon him. I should honor any man who stood absolutely alone, without another individual to support him in his opinion, for having the courage to do so, if he justified his action by the Word of God! To run with the multitude is only too often to go on the wrong road. To believe a thing because the many believe it is a cowards reason! To slink away from truth because she stands in the pillory because she is unpopularbecause the crowd cries her downoh, this is a cowardly spirit! I would rather be on the side of truth with half a dozen paupers than be on the side of a lie with all the kings and prelates who ever rode in their pomp through the streets of this world, for, at the last, they who were on truths side, and on Christs side, shall be honored and they who had not the conscience and the courage to follow the Lamb shall be dishonored and covered with everlasting shame and contempt!   
This principle can also be applied to many other matters. Nevertheless at your word ought to be an argument for keeping on praying. If you have been asking, for seven years, for the salvation of a soul, and yet that soul is not saved, you may be tempted to say, with Peter, We have toiled all night and taken nothing. But if you do, mind that you also add, Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net. Still pray on! If you have begun to pray for any man, keep on praying for him as long as you live and he lives! Or if it is some choice blessing for the Church or for the world, which God has evidently promised and it is laid on your heart to ask for it, still intercede even though for years you should receive no answer to your petition. Still knock at mercys door! Wrestle till the break of day, for, if in the night the blessing comes not, before the morning sun has risen, the Lord will give you the desire of your heart.   
So, too, is it with regard to Christian service. I will suppose that you have begun to labor for Christ and that you feel very stupid at it. You have not much talent and what little you have, you hardly know how to put it to the best use. Well, Brother, Sister, it looks as if you had better not try again, yet I would advise you to say to your Lord, Nevertheless at Your word I will go to work, again. I will try once moreno, I will try many times more. Suppose you have been working in a certain district, or class, and you have not succeededdo not yield! Many a hard piece of soil has, after many efforts, at last brought forth a harvest! If Jesus bade you sow thereand He did, for He told you to sow beside all watersgo, and say, Nevertheless at Your word I will do what You command. When I come to address this congregation, I like to feel that I come because I am told to do so. One of you may say, If I go to that dark village and stand up on the green to preach, I expect I shall be mobbed. Nevertheless at Your word I will do it. It is a blessed thing to render obedience to Christ under the most difficult circumstances. To obey Him when it is pleasant to do sowhen all that you do prospersis good as far as it goes, but to obey Him when everything seems against you and nothing appears to prosperto trust the Lord and still to work on for Himthis is, indeed, making Jesus Christ to be your Lord!   
III. I must not dwell longer on this part of my theme lest I weary you. So I will conclude with the last point, which is this, TO KEEP YOUR MASTERS WORD WILL ENSURE A REWARD TO YOU.   
You who believe in Jesus are already saved, so you will understand that I speak not of any legal reward, as of debt, for this is all of Grace. But the man who carefully and faithfully does everything according to Christs word shall have, first of all, the reward of an easy conscience. Suppose you go home, one night, and say to yourself, Today I have done something that I thought to be right, but I did not stop to enquire if it was according to my Masters will. I did not wait upon Him in prayer for guidance. You will feel very uneasy and uncomfortable in your conscience and if any trouble shall arise through it, you will have to say, I brought this on myself, for I took my own course. But if you can say, at nightfall, What I have done today will probably be much discussed and possibly it will be censured by some. And it may even be that it will cost me much pain and even financial lossbut I know that, as far as I could judge, it was my Masters will. You will sleep very sweetly after that. Whatever comes of it, you will say, I will take it from my Saviors pierced hands and reckon it to be part of the sacrifice that is necessary in being a Christian. It is better to be a loser in that way than to be a gainer in any other, for, as the old Divine used to say, He that can wear the flower called hearts ease in his bosom is better off than he that wears diamonds in his crown, but who has not true ease of heart. If a man goes up and down in his daily business in the world and in his familyand is always able, by Gods Grace, to feel, I have labored as in the sight of God to do that which is right according to the teaching and example of my Lord and Saviorhe has a reward in his own heart from that very fact even if he had no other.   
But, next, there is a great reward in being enabled to obey the Masters word, because rightly looked at, it is in itself a blessing of Divine Grace. When you thank God for the good things He has done for you, thank Him not only for keeping you out of sin, but also thank Him for enabling you to do His will. No man has any right to take credit to himself for his own integrity, for, if he is a Christian, that integrity is the gift of Gods Grace and the work of Gods Spirit within him. If you did, in your youth, form a candid, honest judgment of the Word of God and then, burning all bridges and boats, and severing all connection with that which was behind youif you dared to cast in your lot with the despised people of God, bless Him for it and count it as a great favor which He did for you in that He enabled you to act thus! And if, when tempted with heavy bribes, you have, up to now been able to say, Get you behind me, Satan, and to follow close to the heels of Christ, give God all the glory of it and bless His holy name! In such a case as this, virtue is its own reward.   
To have been obedient to Christ is one of the highest blessings that God can have bestowed upon any man. There are some of us who have to thank God that when there were pinching times, we did not dare to yieldbut when friends and enemies, alike, pointed out another way, we saw what was our Masters way and followed it, by His Grace. We shall have to thank Him to all eternity for this. Once begin to parley with the foeto stifle your conscience or hide your principlesyoung man, once begin to follow trickery in tradeonce begin to dally with the wrong and you will soon find that you are sowing thorns that will pierce through your pillow when you grow old! Be just, and fear not. Follow Christ though the skies should fall and, in doing this, you will be rewarded, for it is a blessing in itself!   
But, more than this, no man fully does his Masters will without getting a distinct reward. Simon Peters boatful of fish was his reward for launching out at Christs word. And in keeping His commandments there is always a great reward. There is usefulness to others, there is happiness to yourself and there is glory to God. I sometimes fear that we ministers do not preach enough about practical godliness. We tell you about justification by faith and the Doctrines of Graceand we cannot too frequently discourse upon such topics as thesebut we must also insist upon it that where there is faith in Christ, there will be obedience to Christ! And we cannot too often insist upon it that while the everlasting salvation of the Christian does not depend upon what he does, yet his own comfort, his own usefulness and the glory which he will bring to God must depend upon that. Therefore, look you well to it, Beloved, young and old, rich and poorand henceforth, as long as you livetake the Word of God to be the polestar to you in all your sailings across the ocean of life and you shall have a blessed voyage, and reach the Port of Peace, not with torn sails and broken cordage, a dismasted wreck, but, an entrance shall be abundantly ministered to you into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

May God add His blessing, for Christs sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **HEBREWS 10:19-39.**

Verses 19-22. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. The place of the Christian is that of the nearest conceivable access to God, for the Holiest is the Holy of Holiesthat innermost part of the tabernacle to reach which the high priest had to pass through the outer court, through the court of the priests and then through the beautiful veil which concealed the Mercy Seat. At the death of Christ that veil was torn from top to bottom, so now there is nothing to keep us back from the Mercy Seat! We, therefore, have boldness and liberty in that way, to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesuswhere the high priest, himself, could only go once in the yearwe may go at all times! The veil has not been merely lifted up, for a while, and then dropped again. It is not rolled up ready for future useit is torn in twodestroyed! Since Jesus has died, there is now no separation between the Believer and his God except by means of such a veil as our base unbelief may please to hang up. The crimson way of Christs shed blood lies open to all Believers! Therefore, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water,

23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. Not only hold it, but hold it fast without wavering. Let us never have a question about it! God grant that we may have an unquestioning, unstaggering faith! To hold fast the profession of our faith seems good enoughbut to hold it fast without wavering is betterand so we ought to do it.

23. (For He is faithful that promised). God gives us no cause for wavering, for He never wavers. If He were an unfaithful God, we might naturally be an unbelieving people, but, He is faithful that promised. Therefore, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.

24. And let us consider one another to stir up love and good works. I am afraid there are some who consider one another to stir up in quite a different spirit from thiswho watch to discover a tender spot where a wound will be most felt. They observe the weakness of a Brothers constitution and then play upon it, or make jests about it. All this is evil, so let us avoid it. Let us all seek out the good points of our Brothers and Sisters and consider them, that we may afterwards be the means of guiding them to those peculiar good works for which they are best adapted. Stir up love and good works. I do not know how we can do that better than by being very loving and full of good works, ourselves, for then will others be likely to say, If these people are helped by Gods Grace to love like this, and to labor like this, why should we not do the same? A good example is often better than a very proper precept.

25. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some. Yes, there are some who even make a bad use of what ought to be a great blessing, namely, the printing press and the printed sermon, by staying at home to read a sermon because, they say, it is better than going out to hear one! Well, dear Friend, if I could not hear profitably, I would still make one of the assembly gathered together for the worship of God. It is a bad example for a professing Christian to absent himself from the assembly of the friends of Christ. There was a dear Sister, whom many of you knew, who used to attend here with great regularity although she could not hear a word that was said. But she said it did her good to join in the hymns and to know that she was worshipping God with the rest of His people. I wish that some who stay away for the most frivolous excuses would think of this verseNot forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some.

25. But exhorting one another and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching. It is not the work only of the minister to exhort, but the Brothers, and the Sisters, too, should exhort one another and seek to stir each other up in the faith and fear of God.

26, 27. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. This is a solemn text, containing a very terrible Truth of God. If, after having been regenerated and made children of God, we were willfully and deliberately to let the Savior go and apostatize altogether to the world, there would be no hope for us. What, then, is our hope? Why, that we shall never be permitted to do sothat the Grace of God will keep us so that, although we may fall like Peter, we shall not fall away like Judasthat, though we may sin, there shall not be that degree of studied willfulness about it that would make it to be the sin unto deatha deliberate act of spiritual suicide. The Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints derives great glory from this other Truth of God that if they did not persevere, there is no second means of Grace, no other plan of salvation. No man was ever born-again twice! No man was ever washed twice in the precious blood of Jesus! The one washing makes us so clean that, he that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, for which Jesus provides by daily cleansingbut the one grand atoning act never fails. If it did fail, there would remain no more sacrifice for sins.

28, 29. He that despised Moses Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy who has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith He was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of Grace? For apostasy from Christ would amount to all thisand if that were possible, what Grace would remain?

30. For we know Him that has said, Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense, says the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. O professors, take this message home to your hearts! Let everyone of us take it homeThe Lord shall judge His people. Gods fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem! If a man tries nothing else, he will test his gold. And if no others shall be judged, yet certainly those will be who say that they are the Lords people! In that dread Day He will separate the goats from the sheep, the tares from the wheat, and the dross from the gold! His fan will be in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor! He will sit as a refiner of silver and He will purify the sons of Levi. He shall be like a refiners fire and like fullers soap. Woe to those, in that Day, who are a defilement to His Church and an adulteration to the purity of His people!

31. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. What a terrible verse that is! It is a text that ought to be preached from by those who are always saying that the punishment of the wicked will be less than, according to our minds, the Word of God leads us to expect it to beIt is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

32. But call to remembrance the former days. The Apostle is not expecting that any of them will ever go back to where they were before. He is persuaded that they will persevere even to the end. The very warning that he gives is a powerful preventive against apostasy. Now comes the exhortationCall to remembrance the former days. Some of you can call to remembrance the time when you joined the Churchwhen you had to run the gauntlet for Christs sake. Then, in your early Christian life, you feared nothing and nobody so long as you could glorify God. You then had great enjoyment, sweet seasons of communion with your Lord Call to remembrance the former days.

32, 33. In which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, while you were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, while you became companions of them that were so used. In your early Christian days, you were pointed at and regarded as quite singular for being servants of Christ. Or, possibly, it was not yourselves so much as your pastors, your leaders, your friends who were prominent in the Church at whom the arrows of the adversaries were aimed. They shot at you through them and, sometimes, that pained you much more than when they distinctly attacked you. Altogether, it was a great fight of afflictions that you had to endure.

34. For you had compassion on me in my chains. In those early days the Jewish Believers clung to Paul just as ardently as the unbelieving Jews persecuted him!

34, 35. And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that you have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away, therefore, your confidence which has great recompense of reward. Be like the brave Spartan who would never lose his shield, but would come home either with it or on it! Cast not away your confidence. You trusted in God in those early days and nothing seemed to daunt you, then. Cast not away your confidence. Rather, get more to add to it! Let there be no thought of going back, but may there rather be a distinct advance!

36. For you have need of patience. Our supply of that virtue is often very short. It is an article of which there is very little in the market and all of us have need of more of itYou have need of patience.

36. That, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. There must first be the doing of the will of Godand then the reward will come afterwards. God will not give to His people their full reward yet. Patience, then, Brother! Patience, Sister! Saturday night will come one of these daysyour weeks work will then be over and you will be more than repaid for anything you have done for your Lord!

37, 38. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. The drawers backthe mere professorsthose who say they have been illuminated and who have tasted, in a measure, the sweetness of religion, yet who never received Christ in their inmost heartthese are the people in whom God has no pleasure!

39. But we. What a consoling end this is to the chapter! It ought to comfort every Believer in Christ who has been distressed by the earlier verses! But we

39. Are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. May that be true of all of us, for our Lord Jesus Christs sake! Amen.

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PETERS PRAYER   
NO. 3407

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 21, 1914.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING JUNE 10, 1869.

**When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.   
Luke 5:8.**

THE disciples had been fishing all night. They had now given up fishingthey had left their boats and were mending their nets. A Stranger appears. They had seen Him, probably, once before, and they remembered enough of Him to command respect. Besides, the tone of voice in which He spoke to them and His manner at once ruled their hearts. He borrowed Simon Peters boat and preached a sermon to the listening crowds. After He had finished the discourse, as though He would not borrow their vessel without giving them their hire, He bade them launch out into the deep and let down their nets again. They did so and, instead of disappointment, they at once took so vast a haul of fish that the boats could not contain all and the net was not strong enough and began to break. Surprised at this strange miracleoverawed, probably by the majestic appearance of that matchless One, who had worked it, Simon Peter thought himself quite unworthy to be in such companyand fell on his knees and cried this strange prayerDepart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. So I desire that, first of all, we shall hear

I. THE PRAYER IN THE WORST SENSE WE CAN GIVE TO IT. It is always wrong to put the worst construction on anyones words and, therefore, we do not intend to do so except by way of license and, for a few moments only, to see what might have been made out of these words. Christ did not understand Peter so. He put the best construction upon what he said, but if a caviler had been there, a wrong interpretation would have been to this sentenceDepart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.   
The ungodly virtually pray this prayer. When the Gospel comes to some men and disturbs their conscience, they say, Go your way for this time. When I have a more convenient season, I will send for you. When some troublesome preacher tells them of their sinswhen he puts a burning Truth of God into their conscience and awakens them so that they cannot sleep or restthey are very angry with the preacher and the Truth that he was constrained to speak. And if they cannot bid him get out of their way, they can at least get out of his way, which comes to the same thing! And so the spirit of it is, We do not want to give up our sin. We cannot afford to part with our prejudices, or with our darling lusts and, therefore, departget out of our wayleave us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come to torment us before our time? Peter meant nothing of this sort, but there may be some here who do and whose avoidance of the Gospel, whose inattention to it, whose spite and hatred of it, all put together virtually make up this cry, Depart from us, O Christ!   
Alas, I fear there are some Christians who do, in factI will not say intentionallyreally pray this prayer! For instance, if a believer in Christ shall expose himself to temptationif he shall find pleasure where sin mingles with it, if he shall forsake the assemblies of the saints and find comfort in the synagogue of Satanif his life shall be inconsistent, practically, and he also shall become inconsistent by reason of his neglect of holy duties, ordinances, private prayer, the reading of the Word and the likewhat does such a Christian say but, Depart from me, O Lord? The Holy Spirit abides in our hearts and we enjoy His conscious Presence if we are obedient to His monitions. But if we walk contrary to Him, He will walk contrary to us and, before long we shall have to ask *Where is the blessedness I knew   
When first I saw the Lord?*   
Why does the Holy Spirit withdraw the sense of His Presence? Why, but because we ask Him to go! Our sins ask Him to go! Our unread Bibles do, as it were, with loud voices ask Him to be gone! We treat that sacred Guest as if we were weary of Him and He takes the hint and hides His face and then we sorrow and begin to seek Him again. Peter does not do so, but we do. Alas, how often ought we to say, Oh, Holy Spirit, forgive us that we so vex You, that we resist Your admonitions, quench Your promptings and so grieve You! Return unto us and abide with us evermore.   
This prayer in its worst is sometimes practically offered by Christian Churches. I believe that any Christian Church that becomes divided in feeling, so that the members have no true love, one to another, that lack of unity is an act of horrible supplication! It does as much as say, Depart from us, You Spirit of unity! You only dwell where there is lovewe will not have love! We will break Your restget away from us! The Holy Spirit delights to abide with a people that is obedient to His teaching, but there are churches that will not learnthey refuse to carry out the Masters will or to accept the Masters Word. They have some other standard, some human bookand in the excellencies of the human composition they forget the glories of the Divine! Now I believe that where any book, whatever it may be, is put above the Bible, or even set by the side of it, or where any creed or catechism, however excellent, is made to stand at all on an equal basis with that perfect Word of God, any church that does this, in fact says, Depart from us, O Lord. And when it comes to actual doctrinal error, particularly to such grievous errors as we hear of, now-adayssuch as baptismal regeneration and the doctrines that are congruous theretoit is, as it were, an awful imprecation and seems to say, Begone from us, O Gospel! Begone from us, O Holy Spirit! Give us outward signs and symbols, and these will suffice us! But depart from us, O Lordwe are content without You. As for ourselves, we may practically pray this prayer as a Church. If our Prayer Meetings should be badly attended. If the prayers at them should be cold and dead. If the zeal of our members should die out. If there should be no concern for souls. If our children should grow up untrained in the fear of God. If the evangelization of this great city should be given over to some other band of workers and we should sit still. If we should become cold, ungenerous, listless, indifferentwhat can we do worse for ourselves? How, with greater potency, can we put up the dreadful prayer, Depart from uswe are unworthy of Your Presence! Begone, good Lord! Let Ichabod be written on our walls! Let us be left with all the curses of Gerizim ringing in our ears.   
I say, then, the prayer may be understood in this worst sense. It was not so meantour Lord did not so read itwe must not so read it concerning Peter. But let us, oh, let us take care that we do not offer it thus, practically, concerning ourselves!   
But now in the next place we shall strive to take the prayer as it came from Peters lips and heart   
II. A PRAYER WE CAN EXCUSE AND ALMOST COMMEND.   
Why did Peter say, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord? There are three reasons. First, because he was a man. Secondly, because he was a sinful man. And again, because he knew this and became a humble man.   
So, then, the first reason for this prayer was that Peter knew that he was a man and, therefore, being a man, he felt himself amazed in the Presence of such an One as Christ. The first sight of Godhow amazing to any spirit even if it were pure! I suppose God never did reveal Himself completelycould never have revealed Himself completely to any creature, however lofty in its capacity. The Infinite must overwhelm the finite. Now, here was Peter, beholding, probably for the first time in his life in a spiritual way, the exceeding splendor and Glory of the Divine power of Christ! He looked at those fish and at once he remembered that night of weary toil, when not a fish rewarded his patience. And now he saw them in masses in the boatand all done through this strange Man who sat there, having just preached a still stranger sermon, of which Peter felt that never man spoke like that before and he did not know how it was, but he felt abashed! He trembled, he was amazed in the Presence of such an One. I do not wonder if we read that Rebecca, when she saw Isaac, came down from her camel and covered her face with her veil. If we read that Abigail, when she came to meet David, alighted from her donkey and threw herself upon her face, saying, My Lord, David! If we find Mephibosheth depreciating himself in the presence of King David and calling himself a dogI do not wonder that Peter, in the Presence of the perfect Christ, should shrink into nothing and, in his first amazement at his own nothingness and Christs greatness, should say he scarcely knew what, like one dazed and dazzled by the light, half-distraught and scarcely able to gather together his thoughts and put them connectedly together! The very first impulse was as when the light of the sun strikes the eyes and it is a blaze that threatens to blind us! Oh, Christ, I am a manhow can I bear the Presence of the God that rules the very fishes of the sea and works miracles like this?

His next reason was, I have said, because he was a sinful man and there is something of alarm mingled with his amazement. As a man he stood amazed at the shining of Christs Godhead! As a sinful man, he stood alarmed at its dazzling holiness. I do not doubt that in the sermon which Christ delivered, there was such a clear denunciation of sin, such laying of justice to the line and righteousness to the plummetsuch a declaration of the holiness of Godthat Peter felt himself unveiled, discovered, his heart laid bare! And now came the finishing stroke. The One who had done this could also rule the fishes of the sea! He must, therefore, be God! And it was to God that all the defects and evils of Peters heart had been revealed and thoroughly known! And almost fearing with a kind of inarticulate cry of alarm because the criminal was in the Presence of the Judgethe polluted in the Presence of the Immaculatehe said, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.   
But I have added that there was a third reason, namely, that Peter was a humble man, as is clear from the saying, because he knew himself and confessed bravely that he was a sinful man. You know that sometimes there have been persons in the world who have suddenly found some king or prince come to their little cottageand the good housewife, when the king, himself, was coming to her, has felt as if the place itself was so unfit for him that, though she would do her best for his majesty, and was glad in her soul that he would honor her hovel with his presence, yet she could not help saying, Oh, that Your Majesty had gone to a worthier house, had gone on to the great mans house a little ahead, for I am not worthy that Your Majesty should come here. So Peter felt as if Christ lowered Himself, in coming to him, as if it were too good a thing for Christtoo great, too kind, too condescending a thingand he seems to say, Go up higher, Master! Sit not down so low as this in my poor boat in the midst of these poor dumb fishes. Sit not down here, for You have a right to sit on the Throne of Heaven in the midst of angels that shall sing Your praises day and night! Lord, do not stop herego up, take a better seat, a higher placesit among more noble beings who are more worthy to be blessed with the smiles of Your Majesty.   
Dont you think he meant that? If so, we may not only excuse his prayer, but even commend it, for we have felt the same. Oh, we have said, does Jesus dwell with a few poor men and women that have come together in His name to pray? Oh, surely, it is not a good enough place for Himlet Him have the whole world and all the sons of men to sing His praises! Let Him have Heaven, even the Heaven of heavens! Let the cherubim and seraphim be His servants and archangels loose the laces of His shoes! Let Him rise to the highest Throne in Glory and there let Him sit down, no more to wear the crown of thorns, no more to be wounded and despised and rejected, but to be worshipped and adored forever and ever. I think we have felt so and, if so, we can understand what Peter felt, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.   
Now, Brothers and Sisters, there are times when these feelings, if they cannot be commended in ourselves, are yet excused by our Master and have a little in them, at any rate, which He looks upon with satisfaction. Shall I mention one?   
Sometimes a man is called to an eminent position of usefulness and, as the vista opens before him and he sees what he will have to doand with what honor his Master will be pleased to load himit is very natural and I think it is almost spiritual for him to shrink and say, Who am I that I should be called to such a work as this? My Master, I am willing to serve You, but oh, I am not worthy. Like Moses, who was glad enough to be the Lords servant and yet he said, and he meant it so heartily, Lord, I am slow of speech. I am a man of unclean lips, how can I speak for You? Or, like Isaiah, who was rejoiced to say, Here am I, send me! But who felt, Woe is me, for I am a man of uncircumcised lips! How shall I go? Not like Jonah, who would not go at all, but must go off to Tarshish to escape working at Nineveh! Yet perhaps with a little seasoning of Jonahs bitters, too, but mainly a sense of our own unworthiness to be used in so great a service, we seem to say, Lord, do not ask me to do that! After all, I may slip and dishonor You. I would serve You, but lest by any means I should give way under the strain, excuse Your servant and give him a humbler post of service. Now, I say we must not pray in that fashion, but still, while there is some evil there, there is a sediment of good which Christ will perceive in the fact that we see our own weakness and our own unsuitableness. He wont be angry with us, but separating the chaff from the wheat, He will accept what was good in the prayer and forgive the bad.  
Sometimes, again, dear Friends, this prayer has been almost on our lips in times of intense enjoyment. Some of you know what I mean, when the Lord draws near unto His servants and is like the consuming fire and we are like the bush that seemed to be altogether on a blaze with the excessive splendor of God realized in our souls! Many of Gods saints have, at such times, fainted. You remember Mr. Flavel tells us that riding on horseback on a long journey to a place where he was to preach, he had such a sense of the sweetness of Christ and the Glory of God, that he did not know where he wasand he sat on his horse for two hours, togetherthe horse wisely standing still! And when he came to himself he found that he had been bleeding freely through the excess of joy. And as he washed his face in the brook by the roadside he said he felt, then, that he knew what it was to sit on the doorstep of Heaven and he could hardly tell that if he had entered the pearly gates, he would have been more happy, for the joy was excessive. To quote what I have often quoted before, the words of Mr. Welsh, a famous Scotch Divine who was under one of those blessed deliriums of heavenly light and rapturous fellowship, exclaimed, Hold, Lord! Hold! It is enough! Remember, I am but an earthen vessel, and if You give me more, I die! God does sometimes put His new wine into our poor old bottles and then we are half inclined to say, Depart, Lord! We are not yet ready for Your glorious Presence. It does not come to saying thatit does not amount to all that in words but still, the spirit is willing and the flesh is weak, and the flesh seems to start back from the Glory which it cannot bear as yet. There are many things which Christ could tell us, but which He will not because we cannot bear them now.   
Another time, when this has passed over the mind, not altogether rightly, not altogether sinfully, like the last two, is when the sinner is coming to Christ and has, indeed, in a measure believed in Him, but when, at last, that sinner perceives the greatness of the Divine Mercy, the richness of the heavenly pardon, the glory of the inheritance which is given to pardoned sinners1 Then many a soul has started back and said, It is too good to be true, or, if true, it is not true to me. Well do I remember a staggering fit I had over that business! I had believed in my Master and rested in Him for some monthsand rejoiced in Himbut one day, while reveling in the delights of being saved and rejoicing in the Doctrines of Election, Final Perseverance and Eternal Gloryit came across my mind, And all this for you, for such a dead dog as youhow can it be so? And for awhile it was a temptation stronger than I could overcome! It was just saying, spiritually, Depart from me, I am too sinful a man to have You in my boattoo unworthy to have such priceless blessings as You bring to me!   
Now, that, I say, is not altogether wrong and not altogether right. There is a mixture there, and we may excuse and somewhat commend, but not altogether. There are other times in which the same feeling may come across the mind, but I cannot stay now to specify them. It may be so with some here, and I pray them not to concern themselves utterly, nor yet to excuse themselves completely, but to go on to the next teaching of this prayer   
III. A PRAYER THAT NEEDS AMENDING AND REVISING.  
As it stood, it was not a good one. Now let us put it in a different way. Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. Would it not be better to say, Come nearer to me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord? It would be a more brave prayer and a more tender prayermore wise and not less humble, for humility takes many shapes. I am a sinful man, here is humility. Come nearer to me. Here is faith which prevents humility from degenerating into unbelief and despair! Brothers and Sisters, that would be a good argument, for seeSince, Lord, I am a sinner, I need purifying. Only Your Presence can truly purify, for You are the Refiner and You purify the sons of Levi. Only Your Presence can cleanse, for the fan is in Your hand and You alone can purge Your floor. You are like a refiners fire, or like fullers soapcome nearer to me, then, Lord, for I am a sinful man and would not be always sinful. Come, wash me from my iniquity that I may be clean. And let Your sanctifying fire go through and through my nature till You burn out of me everything that is contrary to Your mind and will. Dare you pray that prayer? It is not natural to pray it. If you can, I would say to you, Simon Bar-Jona, blessed are you, for flesh and blood have not taught you this. Flesh and blood may make you say, Depart from meit is the Holy Spirit, alone, that under a sense of sin, can yet put a Divine attraction to you in the purifying fire and make you long, therefore, that Christ would come near to you! Again, Come near to me, Lord, since I am a man and, being a man, am weakand nothing can make me strong but Your Presence. I am a man so weak that if You depart from me, I faint, I fall, I pine, I die! Come near to me, then, O Lord, that by Your strength I may be encouraged and be fitted for service. If You depart from me, I can render You no service whatever. Can the dead praise You? Can those with no life in them give You glory? Come near me, then, my God, though I am so feeble! And as a tender parent feeds his child, and the shepherd carries his lambs, so come near to me.

Do you not think he might have said, Come near to me, Lord, and abide with me, for I am a sinful man, in the recollection of how he had failed when Christ was not near? All through that night he had put the net into the sea with many a splashand had drawn it up with many an eager look as he gazed through the moonlightand there was nothing that rewarded his toil. In went the net againand now when Christ came and the net was full to burstingwould it not have been a proper prayer, Lord, come near to me and let every time I work, I may succeed! And if I am made a fisher of men, keep nearer to me, still, that every time I preach Your Word, I may bring souls into Your net and into Your Church that they may be saved?  
What I want to draw out from the text, and I shall do so better if I continue bringing out these different thoughtsis thisthat it is well when a sense of our unworthiness leads us not to get away from God in an unbelieving, petulant despair, but to get nearer to God! Now, suppose I am a great sinner. Well, let me seek to get nearer to God for that very reason, for there is great salvation provided for great sinners! I am very weak and unfit for the great service which He has imposed upon melet me not, therefore, shun the service or shun my God, but reckon that the weaker I am, the more room there is for God to get the glory! If I were strong, then God would not use me, because then my strength would get the praise for it. But my very unfitness and lack of ability and all that I lament in myself in my Masters work is but so much elbowroom for Omnipotence to come and work in! Would it not be a fine thing if we could all say, I glory not in my talents, not in my learning, not in my strength, but I glory in infirmity because the power of God does rest upon me! Men cannot say, That is a learned manand he wins souls because he is learned. They cannot say, That is a man whose faculties of reasoning are very strong and whose powers of argument are clearand he wins sinners by convincing their judgments. No, they say, What is the reason of his success? We cannot discover it. We see nothing in him different from other men, or perhaps, only the difference that he has less of gifts than they. Then glory be to God! He has the praise more clearly and more distinctlyand His head who deserves itwears the crown!   
See, then, what I am aiming at with you, dear Brothers and Sisters. It is this do not run away from your Masters work, any of you, because you feel unfitbut for that reason do twice as much! Do not give up praying because you feel you cannot pray, but pray twice as much, for you need more prayer and, instead of being less with God, be more! Do not let a sense of unworthiness drive you away. A child should not run away from its mother at night because it needs washing. Your children do not stay away from you because they are hungry, nor because they have torn their clothesthey come to you because of their necessities! They come because they are children, but they come more often because they are needy childrenbecause they are sorrowful children! So let every need, let every pain, let every weakness, let every sorrow, let every sin drive you to God. Do not say, Depart from me. It is a natural thing that you should say so and not a thing altogether to be condemned, but it is a glorious thing, it is a God-honoring thing, it is a wise thing to say, on the contrary, Come to me, Lord. Come still nearer to me, for I am a sinful man and without Your Presence I am utterly undone.   
I shall say no more, but I would that the Holy Spirit would say this to some who are in this house, who have long been invited to come and put their trust in Jesus, but always plead as a reason for not coming that they are too guilty, or that they are too hardened, or too something or other! Strange that what one man makes a reason for coming, another makes a reason for staying away! David prayed in the Psalms, Lord have mercy and pardon my iniquity, for it is great. Strange argument, you will say. It is a grand one! Lord, here is great sin and there is now something that is worthy of a great God to deal with! Here is a mountain sin, Lord, have Omnipotent Grace to remove it! Lord, here is a towering Alp of sinlet the floods of Your Grace, like Noahs flood, come 20 cubits over the top of it! I am the chief of sinners here is room for the chief of Saviors. How strange it is that some men should make this a reason for staying away! This cruel sin of unbelief is cruel to yourselvesyou have put away the comfort you might enjoy. It is cruel to Christ, for there is no pang that ever wounded Him more than that unkind, ungenerous thought that He is unwilling. Believe, believe that He never is so glad as when He is clasping His Ephraim to His breast! As when He is saying, Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you. Trust Him! If you could see Him, you could not help it. If you could look into that dear face and into those dear eyes, once red with weeping over sinners that rejected Him, you would say, Behold, we come to You! You have the words of eternal life! Accept us, for we rest in You alone. All our trust on You is stayed. And that done, you would find that His coming to you would be like rain on the mown grass, as the showers that water the earth and, through Him, your souls would flourish, your sackcloth would be taken away and you would be girt about with gladness and rejoice in Him, world without end! The Lord Himself bring you to this. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LUKE 15:1-27.**

We shall, tonight, read a chapter which, I suppose, the most of us know by heart. But as often as I have read it, I do not remember ever reading it without seeing some fresh light in it. May it be so tonight!

Verse 1. Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him. A rare crowd they must have been, when it is said all the publicans and sinners! All sorts of sinners came in such numbers that it seemed as if the city had sent out all its hosts of sinners. And these drew nearcame as close as they could for fear of losing a single word! They made the inner ring about the Savior. He had a bodyguard of sinners and certainly there are none that will ever glorify Him as these people will do.

2. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This Man receives sinners and eats with them. They stood further off. Not to listen, but to murmur. Here was the old fable of the dog in the manger. They did not want Christ, themselves, but they murmured that other people should have Him. They despise Him. They thought themselves too righteous to need a Savior. Yet they murmured when the Physician came to His patients to give them the healing medicine!

3. And He spoke this parable unto them, saying. They were hardly worth His trouble. But though He spoke it to them, others who are not of that sort have sucked sweetness out of it ever since! We are told this is a parable, but on looking at it we find it to be three. Have you ever seen a picture in three panels and the whole of the panels necessary to complete the picture? So it is here. Different views of the great work of Divine Grace suiting different persons, so that if we do not see through one glass, we may use a second, and a third!

4, 7. What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. Not that one repenting sinner is of more esteem in Heaven than 99 saints who have been kept by the power of God. No, not so, but there is a greater stir of joy in Heaven at the time of the sinners repentance than there is over all the ninety-nine. And you know how that is. You may have many children and you may love them all alike, yet if one is ill you take far more notice of him just thenand all the house is ordered with a view to that sick child. He may not be the best child you have, but still, for the time being, there is more thought of him because he is ill. And if you should happen to have in your family a boy that has greatly grieved you and has gone astray, I am sure that if he were to repent, you would feel intense joy over him. But it would not be true that you thought more of him than of his brothers and of his sisters who are with you and are obedient to you. We must not learn from a passage more than it teaches. At the same time, let us learn as much as we can from it. It sets Heaven on a blaze of joy when one single penitent turns to his Father!

8. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, does not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she finds it? Eastern houses generally are very dark and if you need to find anything, you must light a candle. Now, this is one piece of money out of ten, as the sheep was one out of a hundred. The woman does not stand counting over the other nine, but she leaves them in the box and lights a candle and begins to make a stir. No doubt other people who were in the house would say, What an inconvenience this dust is. She must find her piece of money. So sometimes in a congregation, we feel it necessary to have special services and makes a little stirand there are some good souls who are inconvenienced and they do not like all the dust. Oh, it matters not what dust we make, as long as we find the lost pieceand if a soul is found, we can put up with some irregularities as long as the precious thing is discovered and brought to its Owner!

9, 10. And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents. Here follows this most wonderful of all parablesthe truest picture of mans folly and lost estate that was ever sketchedand at the same time the most wonderful picture of the Mercy and Love of God that was ever painted!

11, 12. And He said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to His father, Father, give me the portion of goods that fall to me. And he divided unto them his living. In the East the younger son has a smaller portion of the estate compared with the elder. But it is a usual thingcertainly not an unusual thingto let him have his portion while his father is yet alive, that he may make use of it and be able, by his industry, to increase it till he becomes a substantial persona custom not altogether without wisdom in it if there must be a distinction between elder and younger sons. You remember how Abraham gave portions to his sons by Keturah and sent them away, whereas Isaac had nothing because he was the heir and had everything. So this younger son asks for his portion and the father divided to them his living.

13. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. His heart was distant from his father. Therefore he did not feel at ease until he put himself at a distance where he could do just as he likedcould do that which he knew his father would not approve of and what he would not like to do in his fathers house. And is not this a true picture of the man who is not a friend of God? He wants to do as he likes. He desires to be independent and as he knows that what he likes to do will not please God, he tries to forget God. He gets into a far country by his forgetfulness. He says in his heart. No God. He wishes there was no God. He gets as far away from God as he can. Then it is that he wastes his substance. Did you ever look at an ungodly life as the wasting of precious substance? It is just that! The love which ought to go to God is wasted in lust. The energy that ought to be spent in righteousness is wasted upon sin. The thought, the ability that ought to be laid at Jesus feet is all used for selfish pleasureand so it is wasted. He wasted his substance in riotous living.

14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land and he began to be in need. Began to be in need. What a change! At home with his father, then with plenty to wasteand now in need. Those two words, in need, describe the condition of every ungodly man! After a time, he is in needin need of everything that is good and worth having. His soul is a pauper. He is in need.

15. And he sent and joined himself to a citizen of that country. A gentleman with whom he had spent a fortune. Many a time had this citizen sat at his table and drank his best wines. And what does this fine fellow do for him?

15. And he sent him into his fields to feed swine. A very low occupation anywhere, but in Judea a peculiarly degrading occupation. He sent him, a Jew, into the fields to feed swine!

16. And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat. It does not say that he would have stopped his hunger with the husks, for that could not be done. He would only fill his belly fill it up, as it were, with anything just to choke his sense of need. And there are many men that know that the world cannot satisfy them, but it could at least take their thoughts off a little from their inward need and so they gladly fill up their belly with the husks that the swine do eat.

16. And no man gave unto him. He gave to themhe spent all his money with them. He was a fine fellow, then, so they said. But now no man gave to him. And what a mercy it was, for if they had given him all he needed, he would not have gone back to his father! There is nothing like a little gracious starvation to fetch a man home to Christ. And it is a blessed Providence and a blessed work of the Spirit of God when a man at last is starved till he must go home to God!

17-20. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants. And he arose and went to his father. And when he came to himself. He had been beside himself before. There are two things upon which ungodly men are very ignorantGod and themselves. He arose and went to his father. That was the best of all. He stopped not with resolutions, but he actually did the deed! This was the turning point with him. He arose and went to his father.

20, 21. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son. But the father interrupted the prayer. He would not let him conclude it. Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear.

22-24. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fatted calf, and kill it and let us eat and be merry, For this, my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. What a change between being in need and, let us eat and be merry.

*Wonders of Grace to God belong.*   
There is no wishing to fill his belly with husks, now! But the word is passed round, Let us eat and be merry.

25. Now his elder son was in the field. There is a great deal of questioning about who this man wasthis eldest son. Why, dear me, I have known him! I have the misfortune to meet him every now and then. He is a very capital manone of the best of men, but he does not care about revivals, or about having a great many converted. He is very suspicious about such thingshe does not care about making so much fuss over men that have newly repented. He holds rather hard views about them. He was in the field at work.

25-27. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Your brother is come; and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound. Did you ever notice that pointthe fathers gladness because he had received him safe and sound? No bones broken. His face was not disfigured. He was safe and sound. It is a wonderful thing that the sinner should come back to Christ safe and sound, considering where he has been! He has been in much worse danger than if he had been in battle or in shipwreck. He has been with drunks and with harlotsand yet he is received safe and sound. Oh, the wonders that Divine Grace can do, to put safeness and soundness into us who went so far astray!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #981 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

CARRIED BY FOUR   
NO. 981

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, MARCH 19, 1871, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed. And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answering said unto them, What reason you in your hearts? Which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you. Or to say, Rise up and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins (He said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto you, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and   
were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things today. Luke 5:16-26.**

YOU have this same narrative in the ninth chapter of Matthew, and in the second chapter of Mark. What is three times recorded by Inspired pens must be regarded as trebly important and well worthy of our earnest consideration. Observe the instructive fact that our Savior retired and spent a special time in prayer when He saw an unusual crowd assembling. He withdrew into the wilderness to hold communion with His Father, and, as a consequence, to come forth clothed with an abundance of healing and saving power. Not but that in Himself, as God, He always had that power without measure. But for our sakes He did itthat we might learn that the power of God will only rest upon us in proportion as we draw near to God.

Neglect of private prayer is the locust which devours the strength of the Church. When our Lord left His retirement He found the crowd around Him exceedingly great, and it was as mixed as it was great. For while here were many sincere Believers, there were still more skeptical observers. Some were anxious to receive His healing power, others equally desirous to find occasion against Him. So in all congregations, however the preacher may be clothed with His Masters Spirit and his Masters might, there will be a mixed gathering. There will come together your Pharisees and doctors of the law, your sharp critics ready to pick holes, your coldblooded cavilers searching for faults.

At the same time, chosen of God and drawn by His Grace, there will be present some devout Believers who rejoice in the power that is revealed among men, and earnest seekers who wish to feel in themselves the healing energy. It seems to have been a rule with our Savior to supply each hearer with food after his kind. The Pharisees soon found the matters to find fault with for which they were looking. The Savior so worded His expressions that they caught them eagerly, and charged Him with blasphemy. The enmity of their hearts was thus thrown out upon the surface that the Lord might have an opportunity of rebuking it. And had they been but willing, the power of the Lord was present to heal even them!

Meanwhile, those poor tremblers who were praying for healing were not disappointed. The Good Physician passed not by a single case. And at the same time, His disciples, who were looking for opportunities of praising Him anew, were also fully gratified, for with glad eyes they saw the paralytic restored, and heard sins forgiven. The case which the narrative brings before us is that of a man stricken down with paralysis.

This sad disease may have been of long duration. There is a paralysis which gradually kills the body, binding it more and more surely in utter helplessness. The nerve power is almost destroyedthe power of motion is entirely suspended. And yet the faculties of the mind remain, though greatly weakened, and some of them almost extinguished. Some have thought that this man may have been stricken with what is called the universal paralysis which very speedily brings on death. This may account for the extreme haste of the four bearers to bring him near the Savior.

We do not know the details of his case, but certain is it that he was paralyzed. And, as I look at the case, and study the three records, I think I perceive with equal clearness that this paralysis was in some way or other, at least in the mans own judgment, connected with his sin. He was evidently penitent, as well as paralytic. His mind was as much oppressed as his bodily frame. I do not know that he could be altogether called a Believer. But it is most probable that being burdened with a sense of sin, he had a feeble hope in Divine mercy, which, like a spark in smoking flax, had hard work to exist, but yet was truly there.

The affliction for which his friends pitied him was in his body, but he himself felt a far severer trouble in his soul, and probably it was not so much with the view of being healed bodily, as in the hope of spiritual blessing, that he was willing to be subjected to any process by which he might come under the Saviors eye. I gather that from the fact that our Savior addressed him in these words, Be of good cheerintimating that he was desponding, that his spirit sunk within him. Therefore, instead of saying to him at once, Rise, take up your bed, our tender-hearted Lord said, Son, your sins are forgiven you.

He gave him at the outset a blessing for which the patients friends had not asked, but which the man, though speechless, was seeking for in the silence of his soul. He was a son, though an afflicted onehe was ready to obey the Lords bidding when power was giventhough as yet he could neither lift hand nor foot. He was longing for the pardon of sin, yet could not stretch out his hand to lay hold upon the Savior. I intend to use this narrative for practical purposes. May the Holy Spirit make it really useful. Our first remark will be this

I. THERE ARE CASES WHICH WILL NEED THE AID OF A LITTLE BAND OF WORKERS BEFORE THEY WILL BE FULLY SAVED. This man needed to be borne by four, so the Evangelist, Mark, tells us. There must be a bearer at each corner of the couch where he lay. The great mass of persons who are brought into the kingdom of Christ are converted through the general prayers of the Church by the means of her ministry. Probably three out of four of the members of any Church will owe their conversion to the Churchs regular teaching in some form or other.

Her school, her pulpit, her press have been the nets in which they were taken. Private personal prayer has, of course, in many instances been mingled with all this. But still, most of the cases could not be so distinctly traced out as to be attributable mainly to individual prayers or exertions. This is the rule, I think, that the Lord will have the many brought to Himself by the sounding of the great trumpet of Jubilee in the dispensation of the Gospel by His ministers.

There are some, again, who are led to Jesus by the individual efforts of one personjust as Andrew found his own brother, Simon, so one Believer by his private communication of the Truth of God to another person becomes instrumental, by the power of Gods Spirit, in his conversion. One convert will bring another, and that other a third. But this narrative seems to show that there are cases which will neither be brought by the general preaching of the Word, nor yet by the instrumentality of one.

They require that there should be two, or three, or four in holy combination, who, with one consent, feeling one common agony of soul, shall resolve to band themselves together as a company for this one objectand never cease from their holy confederation until this object is gained and their friend is saved. This man could not be brought to Christ by onehe must have four to lend their strength for his carryingor he cannot reach the place of healing.

Let us apply the principle. Yonder is a householder as yet unsavedhis wife has prayed for him a long time. Her prayers are yet unanswered. Good wife, God has blessed you with a son who, with you, rejoices in the fear of God. Have you not two Christian daughters, also? O you four, take each a corner of this sick mans coach and bring your husband, bring your father, to the Savior!

A husband and a wife are here, both happily brought to Christ. You are praying for your childrennever cease from that supplicationpray on! Perhaps one of your beloved family is unusually stubborn. Extra help is needed. Well, to you the Sunday school teacher will make a third. He will take one corner of the bed. And happy shall I be if I may join the blessed group, and make the fourth. Perhaps, when home discipline, the schools teaching, and the ministers preaching shall go together, the Lord will look down in love and save your child.

Dear brother, you are thinking of one whom you have long prayed for. You have spoken to him also, and used all proper means, but as yet without effect. Perhaps you speak too comfortingly to himit may be you have not brought that precise Truth of God to bear upon him which his conscience requires. Seek yet more help. It may possibly be that a second brother will speak instructively, where you have only spoken consolingly.

Perhaps the instruction may be the means of Grace.

Yet may it possibly happen that even instruction will not suffice any more than consolation, and it may be necessary for you to call in a third, who, perhaps, will speak impressively with exhortation, and with warning, which may possibly be the great requisite. You two, already in the field, may balance his exhortation, which might have been too pungent by itself, and might have raised prejudice in the persons mind if it had come alone. All three of you together may prove the fit instruments in the Lords hand. Yet when you three have happily combined, it may be the poor paralyzed one is not yet affected savingly.

A fourth may be needed, who, with deeper affection than all three of you, and perhaps with an experience more suited to the case than yours, may come inand working with youthe result may be secured. The four fellow helpers together may accomplish, by the power of the Spirit, what neither one, nor two, nor three were competent to have done. It may sometimes happen that a man has heard Paul preach. But Pauls clear doctrine, though it has enlightened his intellect, has not yet convicted his conscience.

He has heard Apollos, and the glow of the orators eloquent appeals has warmed his heart, but not humbled his pride. He has later still listened to Cephas, whose rough cutting sentences have hewn him down, and convicted him of sin. But before he can find joy and peace in believing, he will require to hear the sweet affectionate words of John. Only when the fourth shall grasp the bed and give a hearty lift will the paralyzed person he laid in Mercys path.

I anxiously desire to see in this Church little bands of men and women bound to each other by zealous love to souls. I would have you say to one another, This is a case in which we feel a common interestwe will pledge each other to pray for this person. We will unitedly seek his salvation. It may be that one of our seat holders, after listening to my voice these ten or fifteen years, is not impressed. It may be that another has left the Sunday school unsaved. Let brotherly quaternions look after these by Gods help.

Moved by one impulse, form a square about these persons, beset them behind and before, and let them not say, No man cares for my soul. Meet together in prayer with the definite object before you, and then seek that object by the most likely ways. I do not know, my Brethren, how much blessing might come to us through this, but I feel certain that until we have tried it we cannot pronounce a verdict upon it. Nor can we be quite sure that we are free from all responsibility to mens souls until we have tested every possible and probable method for doing them good.

But I am afraid that there are not many, even in a large Church, who will become sick-bearers. Many will say the plan is admirable, but they will leave it to others to carry it out. Remember that the four persons who join in such a labor of love ought, all of them, to be filled with intense affection to the persons whose salvation they seek. They must be men who will not shrink because of difficultywho will put forth their whole strength to shoulder the beloved burdenand will persevere until they succeed.

They need be strong, for the burden is heavy. They need be resolute, for the work will try their faith. They need be prayerful, for otherwise they labor in vain. They must be believing, or they will be utterly useless Jesus saw their faith, and therefore accepted their service. But without faith it is impossible to please Him. Where shall we find quartets such as these? May the Lord find them, and may He send them to some of you poor dying sinners who lie paralyzed here today!

II. We now pass on to the second observation that SOME CASES, THUS TAKEN UP, WILL NEED MUCH THOUGHT BEFORE THE DESIGN IS ACCOMPLISHED. The essential means by which a soul is saved is clear enough. The four bearers had no question with each other as to what was the way to effect this mans curethey were unanimous in thisthat they must bring him to Jesus. By some means or other, by hook or by crook, they must place him in the Saviors way. That was undoubted fact. The question was, how to do this?

There is an old worldly proverb, that where theres a will theres a way. And that proverb, I believe, may be safely imported into spiritual things almost without a caution or grain of salt. Where theres a will theres a way. And if men are called of Gods Grace to a deep anxiety for any particular soul, there is a way by which that soul may be brought to Jesus. But that way may not suggest itself till after much consideration.

In some cases the way to impress the heart may be an out-of-the-way way, an extraordinary waya way which ordinarily should not be used and would not be successful. I dare say the four bearers in the narrative thought early in the morning, We will carry this poor paralytic to the Savior, passing into the house by the ordinary door. But when they attempted to do so the multitudes so blocked up the road that they could not even reach the threshold. Make way! Make way for the sick! Stand aside there, and give room for a poor paralyzed man! For mercys sake give a little space, and let the sick man reach the healing Prophet!

In vain were their entreaties and commands. Here and there a few compassionate persons back out of the crowd, but the many neither can nor will. Besides, many of them are engaged upon a similar business and have equal reasons for pressing in. See, cries one of the four, I will make way. And he pushes and elbows himself a little distance into the passage. Come on, you three! he criesfollow up, and fight for it, inch by inch. But they cannot do it. It is impossible. The poor patient is ready to die for fear.

The bed is tossed about by the throng like a cockleshell boat on the waves of the sea. The patients alarm increases, the bearers are distressed, and they are quite glad to get outside again and consider. It is evidently quite impossible by ordinary means to get him in. What then? We cannot burrow under the groundcan we not go over the heads of the people, and let the man down from above? Where is the staircase?

Frequently there is an external staircase to the top of an eastern house. We cannot be sure that there was one in this case. But if not, the next door house may have had such a convenience, and so the resolute bearers reached the top and passed from one roof to another. Where we have no definite information, much may he left to conjecture. But this much is clearby some means they elevated their unhappy burden to the housetop and provided themselves with the necessary tackle with which to let

him down.

The Savior was probably preaching in one of the upper rooms, unless the house was a poor one without an upper story. Perhaps the room was open to the courtyard, which was crowded. At any rate, the Lord Jesus was under cover of a roof, and a substantial roof, too. No one who carefully reads the original will fail to see that there was real roofing to be broken through. It has been suggested as a difficulty, that the breaking up of a roof might involve danger to those below, and would probably make a great smother of dust.

To avoid this, there have been various suppositionssuch as that the Savior was standing under an awning, and the men rolled up the canvas. Or that our Lord stood under a veranda with a very light covering, which the men could readily uncover. Others have even invented a trapdoor for the occasion. But with all due deference to eminent travelers, the words of the Evangelists cannot be so readily disposed of. According to our text, the man was let down through tiling. Not canvas, or any light material whatever sort of tiling it was, it was certainly made of burnt clayfor that enters into the essence of the word.

Moreover, according to Mark, after they had uncovered the roof, which, I suppose, means the removal of the tiling, they broke it up, which looks exceedingly like breaking through a ceiling. The Greek word used by Mark, which is interpreted breaking up, is a very emphatic word and signifies digging through, or scooping upwhich evidently conveys the idea of considerable labor for the removal of material. We are told that the roofs of Oriental houses are often made of big stones. That may be true as a general rule, but not in this case, for the house was covered with tiles.

And as to the dust and falling rubbish that may or may not be a necessary conclusion. But as clear as noonday is it that a substantial housetop which required untiring and digging through, had a hole made in itand through the aperture the man in his bed was let down. Perhaps there was dust, and possibly there was danger, too, but the bearers were prepared to accomplish their purpose at all risks. They must get the sick man in somehow.

There is no need, however, to supposefor no doubt the four men would be careful not to disturb the Savior or His hearers. The tiles or plaster might be removed to another part of the flat roof, and the boards likewise, as they were broken up. And as for the spars, they might be sufficiently wide to admit the narrow couch of the sick man without moving any of them from their places. Mr. Hartley, in his Travels, saysWhen I lived at Aegina I used to look up not infrequently at the roof above my head and contemplate how easily the whole transaction of the paralytic might take place.

The roof was made in the following mannerA layer of reeds, of a large species, was placed upon the rafters, on these a quantity of heather was strewed. On the heather, earth was deposited and beaten down into a solid mass. Now, what difficulty would there be in removing first the earth, next the heather, and then the reeds? Nor would the difficulty be increased if the earth had a pavement of tiling laid upon it. No inconvenience could result to the persons in the house, from the removal of the tiles and earthfor the heather and reeds would stop anything that might otherwise fall down, and would be removed last of all.

To let a man down through the roof was a device most strange and strikingbut it only gives point to the remark which we have now to make. If we want to have souls saved, we must not be too squeamish and delicate about conventionalities, rules, and proprietiesfor the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence. We must make up our minds to thisSmash or crash, everything shall go to pieces which stands between the soul and its Godit matters not what tiles are to be taken off, what plaster is to be dug up, or what boards are to be torn away, or what labor, or trouble, or expense we may have. The soul is too precious for us to stand upon nice questions. If by any means we may save some, is our policy. Skin for skin, yesall that we have is nothing comparable to a mans soul.

When four true hearts are set upon the spiritual good of a sinner, their holy hunger will break through stone walls or house roofs. I have no doubt it was a difficult task to carry the paralyzed man upstairs. The breaking up of the roof, the removing the tiling with all due caremust have been a laborious task, and have required much skillbut the work was done, and the end was gained. We must never stop at difficulties. However stern the task, it must always be more difficult to us to let a soul perish than to labor in the most self-denying form for its deliverance.

It was a very singular action which the bearers performed. Who would have thought of breaking up a roof? Nobody but those who loved much, and much desired to benefit the sick. O that God would make us attempt singular things to save souls! May a holy ingenuity be excited in the Churcha sacred inventiveness set at work for winning mens hearts!

It appeared to his generation a singular thing when John Wesley stood on his fathers tombstone and preached at Epworth. Glory be to God that he had the courage to preach in the open air. It seemed an extraordinary thing when certain ministers delivered sermons in the theatres. But it is matter of joy that sinners have been reached by such irregularities who might have escaped all other means!

Let us but feel our hearts full of zeal for God, and love for souls, and we shall soon be led to adopt means which others may criticize, but which Jesus Christ will accept. After all, the method which the four friends followed was one most suitable to their abilities. They were, I suppose, four strong fellows to whom the load was no great weight, and the work of digging was comparatively easy. The method suited their capacity exactly. And what did they do when they had let the sick man down?

Look at the scene and admire! I do not read that they said a single word, yet what they did was enoughabilities for lifting and carrying did the necessary work. Some of you say, Ah, we cannot be of any use. We wish we could preach. These men could not preachthey did not need to preach. They lowered the paralytic, and their work was done. They could not preach, but they could hold a rope. We want in the Christian Church not only preachers, but soul-winners, who can bear souls on their hearts and feel the solemn burden! Men who, it may be, cannot talk, but who can weep! Men who cannot break other mens hearts with their language, but who break their own hearts with their compassion!

In the case before us there was no need to plead, Jesus, son of David, look up, for a man is coming down who needs You. There was no need to urge that the patient had been so many years sick. We do not know that the man himself uttered a word. Helpless and paralyzed, he had not the vigor to become a suppliant. They placed his almost lifeless form before the Saviors eyes, and that was appeal enough!

His sad condition was more eloquent than words. O hearts that love sinners, lay their lost estate before Jesus! Bring their cases as they are before the Savior. If your tongues stammer, your hearts will prevail. If you cannot speak even to Christ Himself, as you would desire, because you have not the gift of prayeryet if your strong desires spring from the spirit of prayeryou cannot fail.

God help us to make use of such means as are within our power, and not to sit down idly to regret the powers we do not possess. Perhaps it would be dangerous for us to possess the abilities we covet. It is always safe to consecrate those we have.

III. Now we must pass on to an important Truth of God. We may safely gather from the narrative THAT THE ROOT OF SPIRITUAL PARALYSIS GENERALLY LIES IN UNPARDONED SIN. Jesus intended to heal the paralyzed man, but He did so by first of all, saying, Your sins are forgiven you. There are some in this House of Prayer this morning who are spiritually paralyzed. They have eyes and they see the Gospel. They have ears and they have heard it, and heard it attentively, too. But they are so paralyzed that they will tell you, and honestly tell you, that they cannot lay hold upon the promise of God.

They cannot believe in Jesus to the saving of their souls. If you urge them to pray, they sayWe try to pray, but it is not acceptable prayer. If you bid them have confidence, they will tell you, though not in so many words, perhaps, that they are given up to despair. Their mournful ditty is

*I would, but cannot sing.   
I would, but cannot pray   
For Satan meets me when I try,   
And frightens my soul away.   
I would, but cant repent,   
Though I endeavor often.   
This stony heart can never relent   
Till Jesus makes it soft.   
I would, but cannot love,   
Though wooed by love Divine.   
No arguments have power to move   
A soul so base as mine.  
O could I but believe!   
Then all would easy be.   
I would, but cannot.   
Lord, relieve   
My help must come from You.*

The bottom of this paralysis is sin upon the conscience working death in them. They are sensible of their guilt, but powerless to believe that the crimson fountain can remove itthey are alive only to sorrow, despondency, and agony. Sin paralyzes them with despair. I grant you that into this despair there enters largely the element of unbelief, which is sinful but I hope there is also in it a measure of sincere repentancewhich bears in it the hope of something better.

Our poor, awakened paralytics sometimes hope that they may be forgiven, but they cannot believe it. They cannot rejoice. They cannot cast themselves on Jesus. They are utterly without strength. Now, the bottom of it, I say again, lies in unpardoned SIN. I earnestly entreat you who love the Savior to be earnest in seeking the pardon of these paralyzed persons. You tell me that I should be earnestso I should. And so I desire to be but, Brethren, their cases appear to be beyond the ministers sphere of action.

The Holy Spirit determines to use other agencies in their salvation. They have heard the public Word of God. They now need private consolation and aidand that from three or four. Lend us your help, you earnest Brethren! Form your parties of four! Grasp the couches of those who wish to be saved but who feel they cannot believe. The Lord, the Holy Spirit, make you the means of leading them into forgiveness and eternal salvation. They have been lying a long time waitingtheir sin, however, still keeps them where they are. Their guilt prevents their laying hold on Christ. That is the point, and it is for such cases that I earnestly invoke my Brethrens aid.

IV. Let us proceed to notice, fourthly, that JESUS CAN REMOVE BOTH THE SIN AND THE PARALYSIS IN A SINGLE MOMENT. It was the business of the four bearers to bring the man to Christ. But there their power ended. It is our part to bring the guilty sinner to the Saviorthere our power ends. Thank God! When we end, Christ begins! And works right gloriously, too. Observe that He began by sayingYour sins are forgiven you.

He laid the axe at the root. He did not desire that the mans sins might be forgiven, or express a good wish in that directionHe pronounced an absolution by virtue of that authority with which He was clothed as the Savior. The poor mans sins, then and there, ceased to be, and he was justified in the sight of God. Do you believe this, my Hearerthat Christ did this for the paralytic man? Then I charge you believe something more that if on earth Christ had power to forgive sins before He had offered an Atonementmuch more has He power to do this now that He has poured out His blood, and has said, It is finished, and has gone into His Glory, and is at the right hand of the Father.

He is exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sin. Should He send His Spirit into your soul to reveal Himself in you, you would, in an instant, be entirely absolved! Does blasphemy blacken you? Does a long life of infidelity pollute you? Have you been licentious? Have you been abominably wicked? A word can absolve youa word from those dear lips which said, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.

I charge you ask for that absolving word! No earthly priest can give it to you. But the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, can utter it at once. You twos and fours who are seeking the salvation of men, here is encouragement for you. Pray for them now, while the Gospel is being preached in their hearing! Pray for them day and night, and bring the glad tidings constantly before them, for Jesus is still able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.   
After our blessed Lord had taken away the root of the evil, you observe

He then took away the paralysis, itself. It was gone in a single moment! Every limb in the mans body was restored to a healthy state. He could stand, could walk, could lift his bed! Both nerve and muscle were restored to vigor. One moment will suffice, if Jesus speaks, to make the despairing happy and the unbelieving full of confidence.

What we cannot do with our reasonings, persuading, and entreaties nor even with the letter of Gods promiseChrist can do in a single instant by His Holy Spirit, and it has been our joy to see it done! This is the standing miracle of the Church, performed by Christ today, even as before. Paralyzed souls, who could neither do nor will, have been able to do valiantly, and to will with solemn resolution. The Lord has poured power into the faint, and to them that had no might He has increased strength.

He can still do it! I say again to loving spirits who are seeking the good of others, let this encourage you. You may not have to wait long for the conversions you aim at. It may be, before another Sunday ends, the person you pray for may be brought to Jesus. Or if you have to wait a little, the waiting shall well repay youand meanwhile, remember He has never spoken in secret in the dark places of the earth. He has not said to the seed of Jacob, Seek you My face in vain.

V. Passing on, and drawing to a conclusionWHEREVER OUR LORD WORKS THE DOUBLE MIRACLE IT WILL BE APPARENT. He forgave the mans sins and took away his disease at the same time. How was this apparent? I have no doubt the pardon of the mans sins was best known to himself. But possibly those who saw that gleaming countenance which had been so sad before, might have noticed that the word of absolution sunk into his soul as the rain into the thirsty earth. Your sins are forgiven you, fell on him as a dew from Heaven!

He believed the sacred declaration, and his eyes sparkled! He might almost have felt indifferent whether he remained paralyzed or not, it was such joy to be forgiven, forgiven by the Lord Himself! That was enough, quite enough for him. But it was not enough for the Saviorand therefore He bade him take up his couch and walkfor He had given him strength to do so. The mans healing was proved by his obedience. Openly, to all onlookers, an active obedience became indisputable proof of the poor creatures restoration.

Notice, our Lord bade him risehe rose. He had no power to do so except that power which comes with Divine commands. He rose, for Christ said, Rise. Then he folded up that miserable palletthe Greek word used shows us that it was a very poor, mean, miserable affairhe rolled it up as the Savior bade him. He shouldered it, and went to his home. His first impulse must have been to throw himself down at the Saviors feet, and say, Blessed be Your name. But the Master said, Go to your house.

And I do not find that he stayed to make one grateful obeisance, but elbowing the crowd, jostling the throng with his load on his back, he proceeded to his house just as he was told. And that without deliberation, or questioning. He did his Lords bidding, and he did it accuratelyin detail, at onceand most cheerfully. Oh, how cheerfully! None can tell but those in like case restored. So, the true sign of pardoned sin, and of paralysis removed from the heart is obedience. If you are really saved, you will do what Jesus bids you. Your request will be, Lord, what will You have me to do? And that once ascertained, you will be sure to do it.

You tell me Christ has forgiven you, and yet you live in rebellion to His commands! How can I believe you? You say you are a saved man, and yet you willfully set up your own will against Christs will. What evidence have I of what you say? Have I not, rather, clear evidence that you speak not the truth? Open, careful, prompt, cheerful obedience to Christ becomes the test of the wonderful work which Jesus works in the soul.

VI. Lastly, ALL THIS TENDS TO GLORIFY GOD. Those four men had been the indirect means of bringing much honor to God and much glory to Jesus, and they, I doubt not, glorified God in their very hearts on the housetop. Happy men to have been of so much service to their bedridden friend! Who else united in glorifying God? Why, first the man who was restored. Did not every part of his body glorify God? I think I see him! He sets one foot down to Gods Glory! He plants the other to the same note. He walks to Gods Glory, he carries his bed to Gods Glory! He moves his whole body to the Glory of God!

He speaks, he shouts, he sings, he leaps to the Glory of God! When a man is saved, his whole manhood glorifies God. He becomes instinct with a new-born life which glows in every part of himspirit, soul and body. As an heir of Heaven, he brings Glory to the Great Father who has adopted him into the family! He breathes and eats and drinks to Gods praise. When a Sinner is brought into the Church of God we are all glad, but we are none of us so joyous and thankful as he is. We would all praise God, but he must praise Him the loudest, and he will.

But who next glorified God? The text does not say so, but we feel sure that his family did, for he went to his own house. We will suppose that he had a wife. That morning when the four friends came and put him on the bed, and carried him out, it may be she shook her head in loving anxiety. And I dare say she said, I am half afraid to trust him with you. Poor, poor creature, I dread his encountering the throng. I am afraid it is madness to hope for success. I wish you Godspeed in it, but I tremble. Hold well the bed. Be sure you do not let him fall. If you do let him down through the roof hold fast the ropes, be careful that no accident occurs to my poor bedridden husband. He is bad enough as he is, do not cause him more misery.

But when she saw him coming home walkingwith the bed on his back! Can you picture her delight? How she would begin to sing, and praise and bless the Lord Jehovah Rophi, who had healed her beloved one! If there were little children about, playing before the house, how they would shout for glee, Heres Father! Heres Father walking again, and come home with the bed on his back! He is made whole again, as he used to be when we were very little. What a glad house! They would gather round him, all of them, wife and children, and friends and neighbors, and they would begin to sing, Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities: who heals all your diseases.

How the man would sing those verses, rejoicing in the forgiveness first, and the healing next, and wondering how it was that David knew so much about it, and had put his case into such fit words! Well, but it did not end there. A wife and family utter but a part of the glad chorus of praise, though a very melodious part. There are other adoring hearts who unite in glorifying the healing Lord. The disciples who were around the Savior, they glorified God, too. They rejoiced, and said one to another, We have seen strange things today.

The whole Christian Church is full of sacred praise when a sinner is saved! Even Heaven itself is glad. But there was Glory brought to God even by the common people who stood around. They had not yet entered into that sympathy with Christ which the disciples felt, but they were struck by the sight of this great wonder, and they, too, could not help saying that God had worked great marvels. I pray that onlookers, strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, when they see the desponding comforted, and lost ones brought in, may be compelled to bear their witness to the power of Divine Grace, and be led themselves to be partakers in it. There is Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men, when a paralyzed soul is filled with gracious strength!

Now, shall I need to stand here, and entreat for the four to carry poor souls to Jesus? Shall I need to appeal to my Brothers and Sisters who love their Lord, and say band yourselves together to win souls? Your humanity to the paralytic soul claims it, but your desire to bring Glory to God compels it. If you are, indeed, what you profess to beto glorify God must be the fondest wish and the loftiest ambition of your souls!

Unless you are traitors to my Lord, as well as inhuman to your fellow men, you will catch the practical thought which I have strived to bring before you, and you will seek out some fellow Christians, and say, Come, let us pray together, for such an one. And if you know a desperate case you will make up a sacred quaternion to resolve upon its salvation. May the power of the Highest abide upon you, and who knows what Glory the Lord may gain through you? Never forget this strange story of the bed which carried the man, and the man who carried his bed.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONLuke 5:1-26. Just Published. A Memorial of the Marriage of the Princess Louise, entitled, THE ROYAL WEDDINGthe Banquet and the Guests. By C. H. SPURGEON. Price One Shilling, beautifully bound. Or Sixpence, in paper wrapper. So rapid has been the sale of this little work that nearly ten thousand have been issued in a fortnight. It is well adapted for general distribution. London: Passmore & Alabaster, 18 Paternoster Row.

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SITTING BY   
NO. 1991

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 13, 1887, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by. Luke 5:17.**

A CONGREGATION is a strange aggregateit is like the gatherings of a net, or the collections of a dredge. If it is a very large one, it is especially remarkable. What strange varieties of creatures meet in the Noahs ark of a crowded House of Prayer! If anybody could write the histories of all gathered here, the result would be a library of singular stories.

You, my dear Friends, who usually worship here, have probably no idea of the strange medley of nations, ranks, professions, conditions and religions which are represented in one of the great congregations of this Tabernacle. I am often myself greatly startled when I come across the tracks of people quite unknown to me, except by the newspapers, who have mingled in these vast assemblies. I could not have imagined that they would ever have entered a place where the Gospel is preached! It is noteworthy that God always selects our congregations for usand His arrangements are always wise. I have frequently said to myself, I shall have a picked congregation tonight, and in some instances this has been very singularly the case. Persons have come here who had, themselves, no thought of coming, till some special matter drew themand then the Word of God spoken has been so manifestly suited to their case that it made them marvel! If they had sent notice of their coming and the preacher had known all about them, he might not have ventured to be quite so personal, for he has unwittingly entered into minute details and secret items which, knowingly, he would never have revealed! The Lord who knows what is done in the closet, knows how to direct His ministering servant so that he shall speak to the point and speak to the heart.

In the present congregation we have a large company of people who have long known the Lord and have, for years, rejoiced in His name. We have another company of persons who do not know the Lord savingly, but yet are well acquainted with the Gospel and are not far from the Kingdom of God. They are almost persuaded. They tarry in the border land. Oh, that they would cross the frontier and become dwellers in Immanuels Land! We have also among us some who are far removed from Divine life a people about whom we have little or no hope. Yet it is from among these that we reap the richest spoils for Christ, for He has compassion on the ignorant and on those that are out-of-the-way. I am fond of that word, out-of-the-way. The Lord save all of you who are out-of-the-way ones!

In every congregation we have a fourth class who would decline to be classed at allthey may be said to be here and not here! They are spectators rather than hearers. Like the gentlemen mentioned in our text, they are sitting by. They are too respectable to be numbered with the vulgar crowd. No, nothey are only callers, sitting by. They would not like to have it supposed that they are regular hearers, much less convertsthey are sitting by. They are not repenting. They are not believing. They are not entering into the Truth of God at all. But, they are, sitting by. They have come to look on, take notes and make remarks. They are on the outskirts of the battle, but they are not combatants at allthey are sitting bywhere they hope they are out the range of gunshot!

It is about these who are sitting by that I shall now speak, for I am afraid they are becoming by far too easy in the seats which they have chosen. They are sitting as Gods people sit and yet they are not truly among them, but only, sitting by. They are a very irritating and disappointing part of our assemblies, but, at the same time, there they are and we would not turn them out if we could! We are glad to have these persons to quarry from, for who knows but that out of them, God, in infinite mercy, may select individuals who will never again sit by, but who will be heart and soul with Christ and His peopleand even become leaders of the host of God?

Let me freely speak to you concerning certain of those who sat by. They were by no means to be despised, for some of them were eminent persons. They were Pharisees, members of the separate sect, who kept themselves to themselves, and were punctilious about the externals of religion. Very superior, indeed, were these Phariseesand you could see by their faces that they felt themselves to be persons of importance. With these were doctors of the Law of God, the learned men who had studied the Scriptures very carefully, counted the words of each Holy Book and found out the middle letter of it. These doctors of the Law had come to hear the unlettered peasant from Nazareth, concerning whom they had a very strong, but by no means favorable opinion. They had heard about Him and they condescended to give Him a hearing, half blushing at their own modesty in doing so. Not, of course, that

He could teach them anything they were merely, sitting by, and nothing more. We do not see many of these great folk among our crowds and, perhaps, there are none such here on this occasion, but we cannot be sure. I do not much care to know whether the learned and profound are here, but they do come among us at times, though it is only to sit by. I will say no more about these remarkable people just now, for many others come into congregations merely to sit by. They have not come with any wish to learn, or understand, or feel, or be savedthey are only sitting by.

I. Let our first head answer the enquiryWHAT WERE THESE PEOPLE DOING? They were sitting by. There is a good deal in this. First, they were indulging their curiosity. They had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem to know what this stir was all about. They had heard the great fame of Christ for working miracles and this drew them into the throng which continually surrounded Him. Besides, the crowd, itself, drew them. Why was there such a large company? What could it be all about? They would like to know for the sake of curiosity. They would, for once, hear the Man, that they might be able to say that they had heard Himbut they were not going to be influenced by what they heardthey would hear Him as outsiders, sitting by. They were curious, but not anxious.

As a rule, very little comes of this kind of attendance at places of worship. And yet, I had sooner people come from this motive than not at all! Curiosity may be the stepping-stone to something better, but, in itself, what good is there in it? Persons on the Sunday go to St. Pauls, to Westminster Abbey, to the Tabernacle, to this place and to thatand they suppose that they are worshipping Godwhereas they might just as well have gone to see a show! In fact, it is going to a show and nothing more as far as their motive is concerned! Do not flatter yourselvesif you go to places of worship merely to look about you or to hear music, you are not worshipping God! If you come to this great house to gratify your own fancy, you are no more worshipping God than you would be if you walked in the fields! You are only, in a very poor and groveling sense, sitting by.

Many come into our assemblies and sit by in this respectthat they are altogether indifferent. I do not suppose that these scribes and Pharisees were quite good enough to be altogether indifferentthey leaned the wrong way and were bitterly opposed. Too many act as if they said, I come to hear a noted preacher, but what his doctrine may be I neither know nor care. They do not enquire, What is this doctrine of the Fall? What is this depravity of heart? What is this work of the Spirit? What is this vicarious Sacrifice? They do not care to know whether they are concerned in anything that is spoken of. Nor do they ask, What is this new birth, this translation from darkness to Light, this sanctification of nature? They hear a theological term and dismiss it as no concern of theirs. They do not want to know too much. This atoning Sacrificethey hear so much about it. This shedding of the precious blood of Jesus. This putting away of sin by the Sacrifice of Jesusthey will not lend an ear to this saving mysterybut treat it as a matter of little or no consequence. It is nothing to them that Jesus should die!

O dear Sirs, it ought to be something to you! If there is anything worth enquiring into, it is your own state before God, your position as to eternal things, your condition at this moment in reference to sinwhether it stains you scarlet, or whether you have been washed from it in the fountain which Christ has opened! If there is anything worthy of a mans enquiry, it is the matter which concerns his own soul for eternity! Would God you would no longer be found, sitting by, but would in earnest feel, There is something here for me. Perhaps for me there is a peace which I have never known, a joy which I have never imagined. I will see for myself. Perhaps for me there is a Heaven of which I have, up to now, despised. I will make a searching enquiry and see whether it is so or not. May that be your resolve and may you no longer be among those who sit by in stolid indifference!

The scribes and Pharisees were sitting by in another and a worse, sense, for they were there to criticize in an unfriendly spirit, and either find faults, or invent them. I see them take out their notebooks to jot down a Word the Savior said which they thought could be twisted. How they nudged one another as He said something which sounded unusual and bold! Oh, could they but catch Him! When, at last, He said to the sick man, Your sins are forgiven you, I think I see their eyes flash with malignant fire! Now we have got Him! Now we have got Him! This Man blasphemes! They hoped He had now said more than He could stand to and they asked in triumph, Who can forgive sins but God only? They were, sitting by, watching the Savior as a cat watches a mouse! How eagerly they spring upon Him!

My Hearers, this was a wretched business, was it not? It is a very poor business to go to the House of God to criticize a fellow mortal who is sincerely trying to do us good. It will not, in the present case, affect the preacher much, for his skin is hardened and he feels not the tiny strokes of ordinary censure. In no case can ungenerous criticisms do any good. But the pity of it is that when we earnestly desire to show you the way of salvation, some of you should hinder us by petty observations upon a faulty mannerism, a slight blunder, a mispronunciation of a word, or an inaccurate accent! Alas, what small things put the eternal Truth of God on one side! I do not know and I would not like to say if I did know, what petty trifles people will carry away and talk of, after we have been solemnly pleading with them about Heaven, Hell, the Judgement Day and the wrath to comeand the way to escape from it! Was it Carlyle who spoke of the cricket as chirping amid the crack of doom?

I am apt to think that many people are like that cricketthey go on with their idle chitchat when Christ, Himself, is set before them on the Cross. Assuredly this is poor work! I am hungry. I come to a banquet, but, instead of feasting upon the food, I begin to criticize the dress of the waiters, abuse the arrangements of the banqueting hall and vilify the provisions! I shall go home as hungry as I came and who will be blamed for it? The best criticism that you can possibly give of your friends entertainment is to be hearty in partaking of it! The greatest honor that we can do to Christ Jesus is to feed upon Him, to receive Him, to trust Him, to live upon Him! Merely to complain and to question will bring no good to the most clever of you. How can it? It is a pitiful waste of time for yourself and a trial of temper to others. Yet there are many who, like the scribes and Pharisees, are in this manner, sitting by.

Now, I do not care to go farther into these different forms of sitting by, but no doubt some kindly admire, but do not profit. Hundreds of people are sitting by who are attentive hearers and warm friendsand yet have no part nor lot in the matter. They have been more or less regular attendants at this House of Prayer for, say 12, 14, 15, 20 yearsand yet they are not one whit the better! Some go from public worship to the public house and yet they would not neglect church or chapel on any account! Many are no better at home for all they have heardtheir wives are sorrowful witnesses to that fact. Why, some of you have been prayed for time out of mind and you have been preached at as well, but still, you are, sitting by. I cannot make out why you come so constantly and yet profit so little! It would seem to all who knew you a very odd thing if you were seen loafing about a certain shop for an hour and a half one day in the week for 20 years and yet you never bought a pennyworth of goods! Why do you hang about the Gospel shop and yet purchase nothing? On your own showing you are a fool! I do not like using a hard word, still, it is used in Scripture for such as you are. He who believes a thing to be so important that he spends one day in the week in hearing about it, and yet does not think it important enough to accept it as a gift, stultifies himself by his own actions! How will you answer for it at the Last Great Day when the Judge shall say, You believed enough to go and hear about salvation. Why did you not believe enough to accept it? You believed enough to quarrel for it. You would stand up for the doctrine of the Gospeland yet you, yourself, perished in your sin. What answer will you give, you that are sitting by? You will have to give some answer, what will it be? Oh, that you would use a little commonsense about your souls and would quit the seat of the foolish for the stool of the penitentand no more be of those who are sitting by!

II. Secondly, let us enquire WHAT WAS HAPPENING WHILE THESE PERSONS WERE SITTING BY? They had entered the room where Jesus was preaching, where crowds were listening, where miracles of mercy were being worked. They were criticizing, carping and quibblingbut what was happening to them all the while?

Well, first, they were incurring responsibility. Sirs, you cannot hear the Gospel and refuse it, and yet remain as you were! You are either better or worse after hearing the Gospel. It is made to you either a savor of life unto life, or else of death unto death! Remember, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgement, than for Bethsaida and Chorazin, who had heard the Gospel. The refusal of the Gospel is a crowning crimethere is no sin like it! Does not the Word of God say so? This is no gloomy talk of mine. The Lord Jesus taught that the men of Nineveh would condemn the men of Jerusalem because they heeded warning and Jerusalem did not. Oh, you that have heard the Gospel so long, and have been sitting by all the while, what a mountain of guilt rests upon you! How shall you escape? What must become of you after such base ingratitude?

Besides that, they were gathering hardness of heart. Every hour that you listen to the Gospeland bar your heart against ityou are less and less likely to admit it. The bolt that is rusted is hard to move back from its place. The path that has long been trodden by daily traffic has become hard, as though it were paved with stonehearts that have often been traversed by the Gospel become like iron beneath its tread. I fear your consciences have grown hardened by the traffic of the Gospel. I know that it is so with many. The Lord forgive them! If I could have a congregation that never heard the Gospel before, I should feel more hopeful than I do when I speak to you who have heard it for years. What is now likely to affect you? What fresh arguments can I bring? I can tell you some new story, perhaps, but what of that? You have had too many stories already! It is not so easy a matter to retain your attention, now, as it once was the voice has grown familiar and the manner is stale to you. Can I hope that I shall now reach the hearts at which I have shot so many arrows which have all missed the mark? O God, have mercy upon those who have been sitting by so long!

Once again, let me remind you that those who were sitting by were obstructing Christ all that they could. There is a somethingevery preacher has felt itthere is a something in a congregation itself which affects the preacher, even as he affects the congregation. I soon feel when godly men are praying for me and crying, O Lord, help him to preach! I cannot tell you how it is, but so it is, that some congregations freeze me and others set me on fire. When the doctors of the Law and the Pharisees are, sitting by, they drag us down and we cannot do many mighty works. If my eye catches the glance of one of these ice men. If I perceive his wretched indifference and detect his half-concealed sneer, I am weakened by it. I fancy I hear such folks saying, We care nothing for what you say. We do not belong to those whom you can influence. We are clad in mail against your weapons. This chills one to the marrow.

Now, this is the tendency of your conduct if you are sitting byyou chill the preacherand in chilling the preacher you do boundless mischief to the congregation. Dont you know that it was said, even of Jesus, He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief? Even He, as Man, was, in a measure, dependent upon those who surrounded Him! When He saw their faith, He healed the sick of the palsy! And at another time, when He saw their unbelief, He looked round with indignation! It is a terrible fact that certain of you may be so acting as to hinder the salvation of others by your indifference to the sacred message! I believe that this is eminently the case with you that are very good people in all but the one thing necessaryyou do not fear God and your very goodness works for evil! The example of a rank and rotten profligate will not influence certain minds, for they are disgusted by its grossness and driven to seek something better. But when young men see an excellent person like you, so moral and amiable, without religion, they gather from your example that godliness is not absolutely necessary and take license to do without it! Thus, you who are sitting by may be a curse when you little suspect ityou may be encouraging others in the attempt to live without the Savior!

Yet let me not finish this head without repeating the remark that we are glad to have these people, sitting by, rather than not coming at all! Being in the way, the Lord may meet with them. If you go where shots are flying, you may be wounded one of these days. Better to come and hear the Gospel from a low motive than not to come at all! Remember Hugh Latimers quaint story when he urged all his hearers to go and hear the Gospel? He even praised that sleepless woman who had been taking sleeping medicine, but found that there was no drug strong enough to make her sleep till, at last, she said, If you would take me to the parish church I know that I could go to sleep, for I have slept there every Sunday for many years. She was taken to that place of rest and was soon at peace! Well, well, said Latimer, she had better come for sleep than not come at all. And so I sayeven if you come here to sleep, the Lord may awake you to seek and find the Savior! Still it is a wretched businessthis, sitting by.

III. Next, let us enquire WHAT WAS THE REASON THESE PEOPLE WERE SITTING BY? Why did they come to hear Jesus and yet did not become a part of the really attentive congregation, but were hovering round the skirts of it and, sitting by? I would not needlessly offend any of those who have come here at this time, but let me quietly say a few things which may be applicable to them.

In the first place, in the case of the scribes it was self-conceit which made them sit by. They were divided from the common throng by a sense of superiority. They said, What have we to do with hearing Jesus of Nazareth and His message concerning the pardon of sin? Why, they said, we are highly educated people and do not need to listen to so plain a preacher. His salvation we do not need, for we are not lost. Jesus, Himself, said, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick, thus indicating that it was their good idea of themselves which kept them back from Him. That is the reason why so many sit byin their own opinion they are quite as good as the best and are not in need of any great change. They are most respectable people and they believe that they are also upright and generous.

There went a man out of this place one evening who was spoken to by one of our friends who happened to know him in trade and had him in good repute. What? Have you been to hear our minister tonight? The good man answered, Yes, I am sorry to say I have. But, said our friend, why are you sorry? Why, he said, he has turned me inside out and spoiled my idea of myself! When I went into the Tabernacle I thought I was the best man in Newington, but now I feel that my righteousness is worthless. Oh, said the friend, that is all right, you will come again, I am sure. The Word of God has come home to you and shown you the truth you will get comfort soon. That friend did come again and he is here tonighthe takes pleasure in that very Truth of God which turned him inside out! And he comes on purpose that the Word of the Lord may search him and try himand be to him as a refiners fire! He that is most afraid to be turned inside out is the man who most needs to undergo that process!

Alas, many will not let the Word of God search them! They say within themselves, That is good, very good. But it is not for me. Such are those that sit by. They sit in a corner, out of the wind of the winnowing fan. Do you not see them draw themselves up and look very solemnly at other people, as if they would say to their neighbor, There, you take that home! That doctrine is good for you sinners, but the preacher has no reference to me.

These people were sitting by because there was, in them, no sense of personal need, no perception of their own nakedness which only Christ can cover, no sense of inward hunger which only Jesus can remove. They did not need a Savior for themselves, though quite willing to hear Him preached to others. They did not require mercy for themselves, though pleased that sinners should hear of it. They could see and, therefore, needed not that their eyes should be opened. They had all things and had no poverty to plead. So it always will be in the preaching of the Word those will hear it with gladness who perceive that they need what it presents to thembut others will take no interest in it. Conscious need inclines the ear to hearand until the Spirit of God works this in us, we shall be deaf as posts to the voice of loveand continue sitting by.

There was also about these people a mass of prejudice. Their conservative tendency kept them aloof. Carried a certain distance, this tendency is good, but it may turn a man into a pillar of salt and prevent his fleeing for his life. Having drunk the old wine, these immovable people do not desire new because they feel sure that the old is better. Yet if the old wine is sour or musty and the new wine is sweet and good, it is a pity to prefer the bad to the good! The old intoxicating wine of salvation by human merit, or by ceremonies, is, by many, preferred to our Lords own new wine of the Kingdom, namely Justification by His righteousness through faith. Believe and live is set aside for, the man that does these things shall live by them. They prefer Sinai to Calvary, their own filthy rags to the Lords perfect robe of righteousness! They stick to the Old Covenant, which is taken away, and cannot endure the Everlasting Covenant of Grace. The prejudice of proud human nature is hard to overcomemen are not willing to search the Scriptures and see whether they are right or notthey stick to their inherited falsehoods.

Many are sitting by because of resolute unbelief and determined selfconfidence. O Friends, it is born in us by nature to believe in ourselves! What is that but clear idolatry? It is not till we are born again that we come to believe in Jesus Christ and so to trust in the living God and receive a living hope! May the Lord deliver us from that old, good-for-nothing confidence in self, confidence in works, confidence in outward ceremonies, confidence in the flesh! Oh, that we might pour the old and musty wine on the groundand taste of the new wine, crushed from the cluster by the dying Son of Godthe new wine of salvation by Grace, through faith, unto the glory of God! Would God that those who are sitting by on account of their vainglorious prejudices, may be brought into the marriage feast of Grace and made willing to wear the wedding garment and honor Him who has prepared it! Prejudice is the ruin of thousands! They might be made to see if they did not think that they already saw! They might be happy in the Lord if their groundless conceit did not make them to be sitting by.

IV. WHAT SHALL WE SAY OF THESE SITTERS-BY? Just a word by way of forming an estimate of them and then I will have done with them. Oh, that the Lord, Himself, might deal with them by His Holy Spirit! These sitters-by, these people who do not go in for the Truth of God and faith of the Gospel, but hear it, play with it, talk about it and then have done with it what shall I say of them?

Why, first, they seem to me to be wonderfully out of place when you think of the Lord who was preaching. How could they be indifferent in His Presence? He was at a white heat and they were blocks of ice. He was all energy and they were sitting by. He spending and being spentand they sitting by. He engaged all night in prayer with His Divine Father and now, coming forth clothed with Divine Power to healand they, sitting by. Pretending to be doctors and teachers of the people and, therefore, under great responsibility, they were yet content to be, sitting by, when Jesus was pouring out His soul! O Sirs, none of us ought to be indifferent in the Presence of the Christ of God! He is clad with zeal as with a cloak how can we be lukewarm? He laid down His life for the sheephow can we live for self? He still lives for His people and holds not His peace, but by His incessant pleading He proves His everlasting interest in our cause for us to be, sitting by, is horrible ingratitude! Men who have received great salvation, sitting by, while the Savior dies? Or even men who are in danger of sinking at once to Hell carelessly, sitting by, when the gate of mercy is set open before them by the pierced hand of Jesus? Oh, it is sadly strange! Lord, teach this foolish generation wisdom! Let them not still be, sitting by!

It was equally incongruous with the condition of the rest of the congregation. Look, there is such a crowd around the Lord Jesus that they are trying to bring in a man who is sick of the palsy, but they cannot get him near. Nobody will make waythey are all so eager to hear and to get a blessing! At last they take the palsied man to the roofthey actually break up the tiling! They lower the man down with ropes over the heads of the people! Yes, right in among the learned lawyers and the proud Pharisees! The pieces of the tiles are falling everywhere! The dust is on the doctors and divines! Look how eager, how earnest, how impetuous the people are! And yet these gentlemen Pharisees and lawyers are, sitting by with cold indifference!

Look at them taking out their notebooks to jot down an expression with which they may find fault! See how they coolly observe little points in what is done! They are not movednot they! A man is about to be healed who has long been paralyzedand they treat it as if it were an interesting case in the hospitalaround which a company of medical students gather, as to a show. How can they act in this way? Are they made of stone or iron? One would think common humanity might affect thembut no, they will not enter into anything that Jesus says or doesthey are merely, sitting by.

It will be an awful thing for some of you to be cast away foreverand then to remember that you sat next to people that were savedsat next them at the very time when they heard unto eternal life! How will you bear to know that these people were saved by that powerful sermon which drove even you to your knees, but you shook off the impression, grew careless and again continued in your sin? This reflection will sting you as does a serpent when you are past hope and are driven forever from the Presence of God. This will be as the worm that never dieswhen you say to yourselfI was present when Jesus, by His Grace, renewed mens hearts. I was present when my companion heard, believed and was saved, but I willfully refused to hear and turned away from the only Savior. What shall I say to yonder husband who will have to remember that she who in this world lay in his bosom, wept for him, told him that she had found a Savior and begged him to think of his immortal soul and turn unto the Lord? You will remember how you steeled your heart against the blessed influence and refused the holy tears of one you loved so well!

Or is it so, that your darling child came home from the Sunday school weeping on account of sin and you, the mother who ought to have thanked God for blessing your offspring, ridiculed your childs repentance? This is, sitting by, in a most horrible waysitting by to scoff and oppose! While others are savedyou are sitting by. Why, if I were sick of the palsy, tonight. If I were lying here and I saw the Master healing you who were sick, I think I should at least cry out as best I could, Jesus, Master, have mercy on me! I exhort any of you who are unconverted to take these words out of my mouth and with your whole heart use them in prayer. Cry, Lord have mercy upon me! Christ have mercy upon me!

V. I had much more to add upon this point, but time admonishes me. Let me in a few sentences speak to some WHO SHOULD NOT BE AMONG THOSE WHO ARE SITTING BY. You that feel your soul-sickness will not be of that number. You feel your guiltyou feel your need of Christ. You are broken downthen do not, for a moment, sit by! Rise, He calls you! Press through the crowd to Jesus! Believe in Him and live! May His Spirit lead you to do so at once!

Before I found the Savior, I visited nearly every place of worship in the town where I lived, but I did not find full salvation at any one of them. I believe that it was through my own ignorance. In the little Primitive Methodist chapel, when I heard Christ preached and was bid to look, alone, to Him, I found rest unto my soul! But the reason why I found Him was because His Grace had made me know that I needed Him. I do not suppose that the sermon which was made useful to me had anything in it more remarkable than other Gospel sermons. The special point was that the Lord had prepared me to receive the Gospel message. They say that the water of the Nile is very sweet. We have heard some of our countrymen assert that a very little of it was too much for them and that they never wished to drink of it again. There is no use in disputing about tastes, but surely, people might agree upon the quality of water! Yet some praise this Nile water to the skies and others call it muddy stuff. The reason why the water of the Nile is so sweet to Egyptians is that their climate is dry and the people are thirstyand other water is scarce. Under a burning sun, a drink of water is very refreshing. To the soul that is thirsty after mercy and reconciliation and eternal life, every promise of the Lord is delightful! Nothing puts such a savor and flavor into the Gospel as that work of the Holy Spirit, by which we are made to feel our great need of it!

Oh, if you have not found Christyou that are seeking Himgo to every place where Christ is preached till you find Him! If you do not get the heavenly blessing in one place, go to another! Do not stop where there is no blessing merely because it is your regular place of assembly. You need bread and if one baker has not got it, go to another! Seek after the Savior as men dig for gold or search for diamonds.

I have heard of a man who had long attended one of the Churches in Scotland, but as he did not get any good, he went off to listen to certain irregular preaching and there he found peace with God. The old minister warned him of his wickedness in being away from the Church and said, in Scotch, what I must put into English, Donald, you should not have gone to hear that man! He is not of the old Church. Well, said Donald, but I needed a blessing and I felt I must go anywhere to get it. Well, said the minister, Donald, you should have waited at the pool, like the man in the Gospels, till the water was stirred. Well, Sir, said the man, but you see that man saw that the water was sometimes stirred and though he did not get in, himself, yet he knew that others stepped in and were healed. And that encouraged him to wait a little longer, in the hope that his turn might yet come. But I have lain at your pool these 40 years and I never saw the water stirred, neither did anybody get healed in it. And so I thought it was time for me to look somewhere else.

Indeed it was! We cannot afford to be lost for the sake of churches or chapels. O my Hearer, seek the Lord with all your heart! And seek Him on and on till you find Him! Do not be a mere sitter-by any longer, but obey the call which bids you draw near. Be not content to sit in any pretended House of Prayer where prayer is not heard and souls are never saved. Do not let down your bucket into any more dry wells. Go where Jesus is! Traverse all the denominations and stay not till you can say, I have found Jesus. If He is not preached in one place, hasten to another. Keep your ears and your hearts open. Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Do not fall into the habit of going to a place because you always went there and always mean to go there. Why, some of you have almost grown to your seats and are as wooden as that which bears you up! O mere sitter-by, I implore you, do not remain in this wretched case! May your cry to the Lord be, at this moment

*Give me Christ, or else I die!*   
May God help you to make your hearing a reality, your sitting under the Gospel a true reception of it!

You that are in great sorrow I do not think it possible that you can be altogether sitters-by! You have been disappointed in love. You have met with a world of trouble, or else you have been the round of amusements and have seen no end of gaietybut you are sick of itand weary of the world and of yourself. You feel that you might as well try to fill your belly with wind as fill your soul with the worlds amusementsand you have come here jaded and nauseated. Your heart is laboring and heavy laden and you pine for rest. Come and try my Master! He invites you. He entreats you to come. He cries to you, Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. He means what He says. You have labored enough for the world, and its wages are not worth having. Come now to Him whose gift is eternal life! May His Holy Spirit lead you to come at once and delay no longer! You are one of those that cannot afford to be, sitting by, for sin curses you, death threatens you and eternal wrath pursues you! I know how it will be with you unless Grace preventsyou will go home and the sermon will be overand the many of you will still be sitters-by, for you will shake off conviction and still be careless. Remember, I have warned you. Will you despise the warning?

A poor fallen woman is here at this time, worn out with her crimes. Does she desire to know the Savior? Let her confess her sin and forsake itthen she will not be sitting by. There is a broken-hearted youth here who begins to reap the wild oats he has sown. Will he sit by? Does he wish to know how his heart can be changed, his sin forgiven, his soul comforted? Let him arise and go to his Fatherand no longer be sitting by.

And so I close with a full and free Gospel call! Come and welcome, you that gladly would come to Jesus. Come just now, with all your sins about you, and behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! If you want to know what it is to come to Him, know that it is to trust Him. Go to your chamber, and look up and say, Jesus, I cannot see You; but You are wherever there is a broken heart. Behold, I seek You; reveal Yourself to me. I trust You to forgive me and to renew me.

Jesus will not refuse you, for He casts out none that come to Him. I said, Go home, but I will alter that. Keep your seats and seek Him where you are and as you are! Before you leave this place, commit yourselves into those dear hands which were pierced for the guilty and are always ready to grasp a sinner. As the pearl fisher is happy when he finds a handful of pearls, so is Jesus happy when He lays hold on poor sinners and takes them to be His own! Commit your souls to His keeping. Wholly trust Him! Trust him only! Trust him now! Today, escape for your lives and find refuge in the Rock of Ages! Jesus cries, Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth. O Lord, lead all these sinners to look to Jesus by Your Holy Spirit for Your mercys sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONLuke 5:12-26.** HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK430, 606, 992.

DEAR FRIENDSThough for a while I shall be absent in body, yet shall I be present with you in spirit. Week by week I shall prepare the sermon with care and, I trust, it will be as profitable and as life-like as if I had just preached it. I beseech you to be more than ever importunate in prayer. A fierce battle is raging concerning the GospelThe God that answers by fire, let Him be God. Let us plead for the fire of the Holy Spirit! If we have a special visitation from above, we shall see the defeat of this worst form of infidelitythe infidelity which wears the Christian name. My parting watchword is, Let us pray.  
Yours, for Christs sake,

*C. H. SPURGEON.* Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #720 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE GOSPELS HEALING POWER

NO. 720

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 11, 1866, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.**

**Luke 5:17.**

LUKE, the writer of this Gospel, was a physician and therefore had a quick eye for cases of disease and instances of cure. You can trace throughout the whole of his Gospel the hand of one who was skilled in surgery and medicine. I gather from this that whatever may be our calling, or in whatever art or science we may have attained proficiency, we should take care to use our knowledge for Christ. And that if we are called being physicians we may understand the work of the Lord Jesus all the better by what we see in our own work, and we may also do much for our Lord in real substantial usefulness among our patients.

Let no man despise his calling. Whatever instrument of usefulness God has put into your hands, consider that the Great Captain knew what weapons were best for you to wield. Covet not your neighbors sword or spear, but use that which your Lord has given you and go forth to the battle of life to serve according to your capacity. If you are placed in this corner of the vineyard or that, consider that you are in the best place for yourself and the best place for your Master. And do not always be judging what your fellow servants ought to do in their place, nor what you could do if you were in another place, but see what it is that you can do where you are and use such things as you have in glorifying your Lord and Master.

One is pleased to observe in the language of a true man how the mans self shows itself. David frequently sings like one who had been a shepherd boy, and though a king he is not ashamed to admit that he once grasped the crook. There is a manifest difference between the prophecies of Amos, the herdsman, and of Isaiah, the royal seer. True men do not imitate one another, but each one, moved of God, speaks according to his native bias and according to the circumstances in which Providence has cast him. It was destructive to Egyptian art when the great men of the land framed articles of taste, and laws of statuary and of painting by which every sculptor must be boundfor then everything like freshness and originality was driven away. The proportions of every colossal statue and of every figure upon the wall were rigidly fixed, and then the glory and excellence of art vanished from the land.

To do the same in religion is even more unwise. To say, You shall all speak after one fashion, and you all shall conform to this manner of talk and life, is folly at its height! Let each man speak after his own manner, every man in his own order, each quickened soul bringing out its own individuality and seeking in that individuality to magnify God and to show forth the riches of His Divine Grace. These remarks were suggested by the abundant record of cures in this chapter and elsewhere in Lukes Gospel. Luke does not write like John, nor copy the style of Matthew. He writes not as a fisherman or a publican, but as a physician.

Luke did not cease to be Luke when he was called by Divine Grace. He was the same man elevated and refined, and taught to consecrate to noblest ends the gifts which he had acquired in his earthly calling. He was a physician before, and he became the beloved physician after his conversion.

I. The text, as we read it, suggests, in the first place, that THE POWER OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPEL IS MAINLY A POWER TO HEAL. The power of the Lord was present to heal them. The power of the Gospel, of which Christ is the Sum and Substance, is a healing power. My Brethren, when Christ came on earth He might have come with destroying power. Justly enough might God have sent His only Son with the armies of vengeance to destroy this rebellious world. But

*Your hands, dear Jesus, were not armed   
With an avenging rod.   
No hard commission to perform,   
The vengeance of a God.   
But all was mercy, all was mild,   
And wrath forsook the throne,   
When Christ on the kind errand came,   
And brought salvation down.*

I have not come, He said, to destroy mens lives, but to save them. Elijah calls fire from Heaven upon the captains of fifties and their fifties, so that they are utterly consumed. But Christ brings fire from Heaven for quite another purpose, namely, that by its power men might be saved from the wrath to come. The Gospel is not intended to be a power to destroy. God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. And if that Gospel is made a savor of death unto death unto any, it is not on account of its own intrinsic qualities or design but because of the perversity and wickedness of the human heart.

If men perish by the Gospel of Life, it is because they make that to be a stumbling stone which was meant to be a foundation. The Gospel does not even come into the world merely to reveal disease. It is true it does discover, detect, and describe the maladies of fallen man. One of the clearest exposures of mans fallen estate is the Gospel of the Grace of God. But it is rather the design of the Law than of the Gospel to discover to man his ruin. It is by the glare of Sinai lightning that men tremblingly read the sentence of condemnation upon those who have broken Gods Law. By the gentler light of Calvary they may read the same Truth of God, and must read itbut this is not the main purpose of Calvary.

Calvary is the place for the healing balm rather than for the lancet and the knife. The work of Jesus, our heavenly Physician, is not so much to point out disease as to indicate and to apply the remedy. Certain philosophers have made it their business and delight, with grim sarcastic smiles upon their faces, to put forth the finger and mark out human wickedness and weakness as a theme for ridicule and sarcasm. The philosophy of the Stoics, the wisdom of such men as Diogenes, was but a heartless unpitying showing up of human folly and sin.

It knew no remedy, and cared not to search for one. They showed poor manhood to he besotted, befooled, debased, and depraved. And there they left it, passing by on the other side as the priest and Levite did with the wounded man in the parable. But Jesus came upon no such fruitless errand. He convicts the world of sin by His Spirit, but it is not to leave the world hopelessly despairing of its restoration, but to recover it by His power! Jesus bears with Him power to heal! This is His honor and renown. He has the eagles eye to see our sicknesses, the lions heart bravely to encounter them, and the ladys hand to gently apply the heavenly ointment! In Him the three requirements of a good surgeon meet in perfection.

Beloved, I trust you and I have known this power to heal in our own cases, and if it is so we know of a certainty that it is a Divine power which comes from our Lord Jesus because He is most surely God. It is the sole prerogative of God to heal spiritual disease. Natural disease may be instrumentally healed by men, but even then the honor is to be given to God who gives virtue unto medicine, and bestows power unto the human frame to cast off disease. But as for spiritual sicknesses, these remain with the great Physician alone. He claims it as His prerogative, I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal. And one of the Lords choice titles is Jehovah Rophi, the Lord that heals you. I will heal you of your wounds, is a promise which could not come from the lip of

manonly from the mouth of the eternal God.

On this account the Psalmist cried unto the Lord, O Lord, heal me, for my bones are sorely vexed. And again, Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You. For this, also, the godly praise the name of the Lord, saying, He heals all our diseases. He who made man can heal man. He who was at first the creator of our nature can new create it. What a transcendent comfort it is that in the Person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth we have Deity Incarnate! In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. My Soul, whatever your disease may be, this great Physician can heal you! If He is God, there can be no limit to His infinite power! If He is truly Divine, there can be no boundary to the majesty of His might!

Come, then, with the blind eye of your understanding. Come with the limping feet of your energy. Come with the maimed hand of your faith. Come just as you are, for He who is God can certainly heal you! None shall say unto the healing flood of His love, Up to here can you go and no further. The utmost length of human sickness can be reached by this great Physician! Have confidence, O poor doubting heart! Have unstaggering confidence in the Divine Healer! Although our Lord Jesus healed as Divine, remember that He also possessed power to heal because of His being human. Is it not written, The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed? He used no other remedy in healing our sin-sickness but that of taking our sicknesses and infirmities upon Himself.

This is the one great cure-all. Blessed be the Son of God that the medicine, bitter as it is, is not for us to drink, but was all drained by Himself! He took the terrible cup in Gethsemane and drank it dry on our account. The sharp but healing cuts of the lancet are not made in our bodiesHe bore them in His own flesh. When the plowers made deep furrows, those furrows were not upon the sinners shoulders, but upon the shoulders of the sinners Substitute. Did you ever hear, O Earth, of such a Physician as this? Who heals by suffering Himself? Whose pains, and sorrows, and griefs, and pangs, and torments, and anguish, and death are the only medicine by which He removes the woes of men? Blessed Son of God, if I trust You, seeing that You are Divine, how I will love You!

How I will cling to You, seeing You are human! With what gratitude I will look up to Your Cross and view You, while those blessed fountains of health are streaming crimson floods, and while Your heart, the source of all spiritual sanity, is pouring forth a heavenly efficacious torrent to wash the sinner from all his sicknesses! Come here, all you sin-sick ones, and behold the glorious Son of God, made in the likeness of human flesh, breathing out His life upon the Cross! Come here, you that mourn for sin, you who are palsied and diseased with iniquity! Here is power, power still present in the dying Savior to heal you, whatever your diseases may be!

He healed all that had need of healing while He sojourned here, and the costly balm of His Atonement has lost none of its power. The power which dwelt in Christ to heal, coming from Him as Divine and human, was applicable, most eminently, to the removal of the guilt of sin. Reading this chapter through, one pauses with joy over that twenty-fourth verse, The Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sin. Here, then, is one of the great Physicians mightiest artsHe has power to forgive sin! While He lived here below, before the ransom had been paid, before the blood had been literally sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, He had power to forgive sin! Has He not power to do it now that He has died? Brethren, what power must dwell in Him who to the utmost farthing has faithfully discharged the debts of His people! He has power, indeed, seeing that He has finished transgression and made an end of sin!

If you doubt it, see Him rising from the dead! Behold Him in ascending splendor raised to the right hand of God! Hear Him pleading before the Eternal Father, pointing to His wounds, urging the merit of His sacred passion! What power to forgive is here! He has ascended on high, and received gifts for men. He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. At this moment, Sinner, Christ has power to pardon, power to pardon you and millions such as you are. He has nothing more to do to win your pardon. All the atoning work is done! He can, in answer to your tears, forgive your sins today, and make you know it!

He can breathe into your soul at this very moment a peace with God which passes all understanding, which all spring from perfect remission of your manifold iniquities. Do you believe that? I trust you believe it! May you experience now that the healing power of the Gospel is power to forgive sin! Waste no time in applying to the Physician of souls, but hasten to Him with words like these

*Jesus! Master! Hear my cry!   
Save me, heal me with a word.   
Fainting at Your feet I lie,   
You my whispered plaint have heard.*

This is not the only form of the healing power which dwells without measure in our glorious Lord. He heals the sorrow of sin. It is written, He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds. When sin is really manifest to the conscience it is a most painful thing. And for the conscience to be effectually pacified is an unspeakable blessing. Sharper than a dagger in the heart, or an arrow piercing through the loins is conviction of sin. He that has ever smarted under the pricks of an awakened conscience well knows that there is no pain of body that can be compared to it. When crushed under the hand of God, a man may form some idea of what the miseries of Hell must be.

Correspondingly joyous is the relief which Immanuel brings to us when He brings better balm than that of Gilead and ministers Heavens infallible medicine to a diseased soul. When Jesus is received by faith, He lifts all our sorrow from us in a moment. One promise applied by His Spirit, one drop of His blood brought home to the conscience, and at once there is such a peace so deep and profound that nothing can rival it! What the poet wrote concerning recovery from bodily sickness is doubly true of spiritual restoration!

*See the man that long has tossed   
On the thorny bed of pain,   
At length repair his vigor lost,   
And breathe and walk again:   
The meanest floweret of the vale,   
The simplest note that swells the gale,   
The common sun, the air, the skies,   
To him are opening Paradise.*

God grant that to you who fear His name the Sun of Righteousness may arise with healing beneath His wings!

Jesus also heals the power of sin. Sin may be, in your case, dear Friend, so mighty that like a whirlwind it hurries you away at its pleasure. You feel like the sere leaves which are driven by the tempest. You have scarcely power to resist your passions. You have, perhaps, yielded so long to certain forms of evil that now you are positively powerless in strife against them. Do not, however, despair! Christ can surely deliver you! The demoniac had such an energy of evil within him that he broke the chains and bands with which he had been bound. He cut himself with stones, and howled all night amidst the tombs. But when Jesus came near to him he was soon seen clothed and in his right mind, sitting meekly at the great Physicians feet!

And so will you, poor captive of evil! Do not think that you have to be a drunkard, or that your angry temper needs always be your master! Do not conceive that you must always be a slave to lust, or led captive at the devils will. There is hope for you, Man, where Christ is! And though your disease is of as long standing as your very life, yet a word from the powerful lips of the Son of God can make even you, whole! The power of the Gospel is a power to heal the guilt, the sorrow and the influence of sin. Jesus Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the devil in all their forms. It should not be forgotten that the Lord Jesus is able to heal us of our relapses. I have heard men say that a relapse is what the physician frequently fears more than the primary disease, and that there is frequently a period in the healing process when the virus of disease gathers renewed energy and the physician feels that now, and not at the first, the true battle has to be fought.

We have met with men who have professed conversion, and we trust were changed, who have gone back like the dog to his vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. We have had to mourn over those in whom the change appeared to be great, but it was superficial, and soon the power of evil returned upon them. But, my backsliding Hearer, Jesus is able to heal your backslidings! What a mercy that is! I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely, for My anger is turned away from them, What if you are sevenfold more a child of Hell than you were before, yet even now, eternal mercy that drove out a legion of devils from one of old can drive them out of you! The healing power of my Master is such that if you have backslidden ever so far yet He says unto you, Return! Return! Return!

There shall be more joy over you, you poor lost sheep, than over ninety and nine that went not astray. He shall be more glad to receive you, you wandering prodigal child, than He has joy even over that righteous son who remained always in the fathers house. To sum up much in little, my Master, as a Physician, works cures very suddenly. He touches, and the deed is done at once! He works cures of all kinds. Such as have been the stumbling stones of other physicians have been readily overcome by Him. He never fails. He has not in His diary one single case that has overmatched His mighty power. He heals effectuallythe disease never again reigns when He has once dethroned it. When He casts the devil out of the man, the devil shall not return.

He heals with His word even those who think that they cannot be healed! There is no hospital for incurables now as to souls, for incurables there are none. The Friend of sinners is able to save unto the uttermost those that come unto God by Him. Cases of disease so putrid that men say, Put them out of sight. Vice so detestable that the very mention of it makes the cheek of modesty blush! Such as these the master hand of Immanuel can heal! With God nothing is impossible, and with the Son of God nothing is difficult! He can save the chief of sinners, and the vilest of the vile! In the highest conceivable degree the power of the Gospel is power to heal. Come, poor Sinner, and behold Him who is able to heal you of your deadly wounds! Come look upon Him now and live!

*Raise to the Cross your tearful eyes,   
Behold, the Prince of Glory dies!   
He dies extended on the tree,   
And sheds a sovereign balm for you.*

II. A second remark arises from the text. THERE ARE SPECIAL PERIODS WHEN THE POWER TO HEAL IS MOST MANIFESTLY DISPLAYED. The verse before us says that on a certain day the power of the Lord was present to heal, by which I understand, not that Christ is not always God, not that He was ever unable to heal, but thisthat there were certain periods when He pleased to put forth His Divine energy in the way of healing to an unusual degree. The sea is never empty. It is, indeed, always as full at one time as at another, but yet it is not always at flood. The sun is never dim, he shines with equal force at all hours, and yet it is not always day with us, nor do we always bask in the warmth of summer.

Christ is fullness itself, but that fullness does not always overflow. He is able to heal, but He is not always engaged in healing. There are times when the power to save is more than usually manifesttimes of refreshing, seasons of revival, days of visitationacceptable days, days of salvation. Any student of the worlds history who has read it in the light of true religion will have observed that there have been favored periods when the power of God has been peculiarly present to heal men. My solemn conviction is that we are living in such an erathat this present moment is one of the set times when Gods power is peculiarly manifest.

I gather this from many signs, but even the text assists me in my belief. Observe that on the occasion mentioned in the text there was a great desire among the multitude to hear the Word. In the opening of the chapter we read that they pressed upon our Lord by the sea. Further on we find them coming from all parts of the country in multitudes. Special mention is made of doctors of the law and Pharisees, the last people to be impressed, who nevertheless, overcome by the common enthusiasm, were found mingling with the throng. We are told that the people thronged the house at such a rate that the palsied man could not be brought into the congregation except by the expedient of breaking through the roof!

When Gods power is moving there will be a corresponding motion among the people! They will long to hear when Gods power is with the speaker. Take it as a sign of Divine Grace when the houses dedicated to worship are full. Consider that the Lord is about to fill the net when the fishes crowd around the boat. We cannot expect the Gospel to be blessed to those who do not hear it. We may lawfully and properly expect it will be a blessing to those who have an intense anxiety to listen to it. At the present hour I see a religious awakening among the masses of London, not so great a one as we desire, but still there it is and we must be grateful for it.

We shall not long have to put up with the pernicious nonsense of Puseyismpublic opinion will aid us in putting it down. It has taken a long time to wake up our nation, but it will awaken after all. I think I see the tide of popular feeling turning in the right direction. Men are just now occupied about religious thought, and whether they think rightly or wrongly, there is more attention just now paid to religious truth than has been for many a day. And where ministers do but preach simply and lovingly the Gospel of Christ at this moment they find no lack of hearers. This is a sure sign that the power of the Lord is present to heal.

Observe next that the healing power was conspicuously present when Christ was teaching. Note carefully the favored hour, when He was teaching. Jesus linked the healing with the teaching. It was so with the material healing, much more with the spiritual healing, for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Brethren, is there not among our own Brethren, of whom we can speak with the most certainty, more teaching of Christ now than there was? I am persuaded that the most of my Brethren preach more faithfully and fully the simple truth of Christ Jesus than they once did. Teaching is returning to the pulpits.

Now mark, dear Hearer, whether you are saved or notif you are present where Christ is fully preached, where He is lifted up, exalted, proclaimed, and commended to youyou are in a place where He also is present to heal. Is it not written, I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me? A further sign of present power is found most clearly in the sick folk who were healed by Jesus. Now we know that in this very house not a Sunday passes without souls being converted. We have before our Church meetings the cases of hundreds whom God has blessed by the simple telling of the story of the Cross. This, then, is proof positive that when Christ is being taught, and souls being blessed, He is in a remarkable manner present to heal.

One other thing must be noted, namely, that this particular time mentioned in the text was prefaced by a special season of prayer on the part of the principal Actor in it. Did you notice it? He withdrew Himself and prayed, and then the power of the Lord was present to heal them. Is it so that even with regard to Christ Himself, the Lord and Giver of Life, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead, and who has the Spirit without measure, yet before that Spirit is publicly manifested in any high degree there must be a special retirement for fervent prayer? How plainly does this say to us that the Church must pray if she would have the healing power! And, my Brothers and Sisters, we have prayed! There has been such prayer put up by this congregation as I believe was never excelled, even in Apostolic times!

Last Monday was a day of wrestling of such a kind that the blessing could not be withheld! I have almost ceased to ask further! I wait in joyful anticipation of the heavenly visitation! I come not forth today so much as a sower as a reaper! I believe that the fish are taken in the net, and that we have only to pull it to land! God grant the net may not break by reason of the multitude of fishes! God is with us, and that of a truth in this House this day. Wonders of Divine Grace are being workedwhile we are yet speaking men are being inclined to look to Christ! While we are lifting Him up, tearful eyes are looking to Him! In many a heart there may be heard the cry, I will arise and go to my Father.

Now with all these signs meeting togethera desire to hear, a set time of private prayer, the teaching of the Word, and the manifest blessing of souls under that WordI gather that we have arrived at this present moment at that state which is described in the text.

III. Passing on to a third thought, we observe that WHEN THE POWER OF THE LORD IS PRESENT TO HEAL, IT MAY NOT BE SEEN IN ALL, BUT MAY BE SHOWN IN SPECIAL CASES AND NOT IN OTHERS. It is a melancholy reflection that men may be in the region of Divine power and yet not feel its operations. I have read this verse through a great many times with one objectI have tried, if I couldto make the text mean that the Pharisees and doctors of the law were present and that the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

But the text does not so teach us. The power of the Lord was not present to heal the doctors and Pharisees, for they were not healed. The word them agrees with the noun further back, according to the frequent usage of the New Testament by which the pronouns are not made to refer to the nearer noun, but to another more remote. The power of God was present to heal the sicknot to heal the doctors, nor the Pharisees. And yet how nearly they could have gained it, for had they but known their sickness, and been willing to confess their infirmity, there was power enough to have healed even them!

But as it was, we do not find that one of them was healednot so much as a single doctor of the law, or a Pharisee felt the power which was passing so near to them that they were amazed and staggered and fell to quibbling about it. Dear Hearers, this very melancholy observation must be applied to some that are present now. You may be in the midst of this congregation which is under remarkable visitations of Gods Divine Grace, and yet there may be no power present operating in your heart to heal you. You will observe that those who missed this Grace were not the harlots. Infamous as they were by character, they felt the power of the love of Jesus and entered into His kingdom. We do not find that this power was lacking among the publicanswe have an instance here of one of them who made a great feast in his house for Christ.

Where, then, was the power lacking? Where was it unsought and unfelt? It was, in the first place, among the knowing peoplethe doctors of the law. These teachers knew too much to submit to be taught by the Great Rabbi. There is such a thing as knowing too much to know anything, and being too wise to be anything but a fool. The knowledge of the doctors was that which puffs upnot the knowledge which comes from God. Ah, dear Hearer, beware of head knowledge without heart knowledge! Beware of being so orthodox as to set yourself up as a judge of the preacher, and to refuse to be obedient to the Truth of God.

Beware of saying, Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, that is very applicable to Soand-So, and very well put. Do not criticize but feel. It were better for you that you had been a common plow-boy, whistling at the plow, who never heard these things until today, and have now listened to them, and have received them in all their novelty, and power, and beauty for the first time. This were better for you than to have heard them till they ring in your ears like the bell which you have heard every Sunday, of whose monotony you are weary! Beware of going down to Hell with a millstone of sound doctrine about your necks, for if you will be damned you may as well perish knowing the Truth of God as not knowing it!

No, if you catch the formula and lay hold upon the creed, and imagine yourself to be teachers of others, it is even easier to perish in

that state than it is if you came in to hear the Word untaught before in its glad message. These were the knowing ones who had no power to be healed! Those, moreover, who had a good opinion of themselves were left unblessed. The Pharisees! No better people anywhere, from Dan to Beersheba, than the Pharisees, if you would take them upon their own testimony!.

Observe with due respect their public character. Were they not most eminent? See the breadth of the borders of their garments! How visible were their phylacteries! How diligently did they wash their hands before they ate! How scrupulous about straining out gnats from their wine! How careful to tithe the anise, and mint, and cummin! Yet these were the people who obtained no blessing from Jesus. They were too good to be saved. How many people there are of this kind! Well, says one, I know I never robbed anybody. I have brought up my family respectably and conducted myself with such decorum that nobody could possibly find fault with me.

Just so, and you will not have Christ because you are whole, and have no need of a physician. Ah, says another, surely if we do our duty to the best of our ability it will be all right with us. If you think thus you will find that when you have done your duty to the best of your ability, you will have no part nor lot in a Savior because manifestly, on your own showing, you do not require one! The Lord Jesus will take your own showing and will say, I never knew you. How could I know you? You were never sick. You never needed Me. You declared that you were whole, and you would not stoop to accept the salvation which I, the Savior, came to bring. Thus will Jesus speak to you who now proudly despise His Grace.

Once again, the people who did not get the blessing were not only the knowing ones and the very good ones, but they were also the people who stood by. As one observes, they did not come to be preached at, they came for Christ to preach before them. That used to be the old style of sermon prefacesA sermon preached before the honorable or worshipful company of So-and-So. Now that is the worst kind of preaching anywhere, preaching before people. Preaching right at people is the only preaching worth hearing and worth uttering. But they did not come for Christ to operate upon themthey were not patientsthey were visitors in the hospitals. Like visitors they went round to the beds and looked at the prescriptions put over the sick and observed each case.

And when the physician came in and began to exercise his art upon the sick, they stood by and criticized his treatment, imagining all the while that they were not sick themselves. If they had been lying on the bed sick they could have been healed, but they took only a superficial interest in the healing, for they came not to partake in it. Beware, my dear Hearers, of going to places of worship merely to be lookers! There will be no lookers on in Heaven! And there will be no lookers on in Hell! Take care that you do not play the looker in the worship of God here. Every Truth of God spoken by Gods servants has a bearing upon you. If it is threatening and you are in the gall of bitterness, it is yourstremble under it!

If it is the promise of Divine love, then if you have no part in it, be afraid, be ashamed, be alarmedand fly to Christ that you may partake in it. Those who get no blessing are those who suppose they do not particularly need it and stand by, having merely come to see and to be seen, but not to receive a cure. Those who felt not the healing power sneered and caviled. They said further down in the chapter, Who can forgive sins but God only? When a man gets no good out of the ministry, he is pretty sure to think there is no good in the ministry. And when he himself, for want of stooping down to drink, finds no water in the river, he concludes it is drywhereas it is his own stubborn knee that will not bend, and his own willful mouth that will not open to receive the Gospel.

But if they quarrel, if they raise questions, if they dispute, we know their breed. We understand the race to which they belong, and we know how Jesus said to them of old, You generation of vipers, how shall you escape the damnation of Hell? If any shall not escape, surely they shall not whose only hearing of the Gospel is to make it the butt of their sarcasm and the object of their ridiculewho look derisively even at the Cross itself with a dying Savior upon itand thrust their tongue into their cheek and make jests and merriment of the agonies of the worlds Redeemer.

Beware, lest you have those jests in your mouth on earth, which you will have to digest in Hell! Beware, lest your mockery return upon you at the Last Great Day when the words of Solomon shall be fulfilled, Because I called and you refused, I stretched out My hands and no man regarded, I also will mock at your calamity, I will laugh when your fear comes. There were persons, then, to whom the present power of Christ to heal was of no service whatever and there may be such now. Friend, are you such an one?

IV. In the last place, I want Christian people here to observe that WHEN THE POWER OF CHRIST WAS PRESENT IT CALLED FORTH THE ENERGY OF THOSE WHO WERE HIS FRIENDS TO WORK WHILE THAT POWER WAS MANIFEST. My dear Brothers and Sisters, the members of this Church especiallywhat I have to say is earnestly addressed to you.

You will perceive that as soon as ever it was discovered that the power of healing was present, loving hearts desired to bring in others that they might experience it. Four persons took each a corner of the bed and brought in a palsied man who could not come of himself. They let him down with much inconvenience through the roof. God is blessing the Church now. Christian men and women, join together to pray for your friends who cannot or will not pray for themselves! And if you meet with any in deep distress, palsied with despair who cannot lift the finger of faith, strive to bring them to hear the Gospel. Bring them where Christ is working miracles!

If one of you cannot prevail to lay the case before the Lord, let two of you unite. If two should not be enough, let four blend their petitions. If four should not suffice, tell it to the Church and ask the whole to pray. But strive to bring dying sinners where Christ is working spiritual miracles. If you read further on in the chapter you will learn how to bring some persons to the Savior who would never hear of Him otherwise. Levi made a great feast, for he thought to himself, I should like Jesus to come and preach to the publicans. They are such great sinners, just such as I am. If I could but get them to hear Him they might be converted.

But, he thought, if I ask them they would say they could not afford to give up a days work. They will not care to listen to a sermon. So (he said) I will get them this wayI will invite them to my house to a feast. They will be sure to come then, and then I will ask Jesus to come and eat with them, and I know He will not let them go without saying a good word. So you see he used arts as fowlers do when they are anxious to catch their prey! Now cannot you be as watchful and thoughtful in your generation as Levi was? Cannot you get the outcasts and the neglecters of the Sunday to your own house or to anybody elses house, and use means to bring them under the sound of Gods Word?

Why, if you have a few flowers in your back room, if it rains in the summer time, do not you always put them out in it? You put all the pots out in the garden to let them catch the shower. Do so with your friends, your neighbors, your children, your kinsfolkwhile the rain of Divine Grace is dropping, try to get them under the influence of itand if they will not come by one means try another! Only get them where the power of the Lord is present, for perhaps Jesus may look upon them and they may look to Him and may be healed!

And oh, let me say in closing, if they should not be saved, the responsibility will not then rest with you, even as the responsibility this morning does not rest with me. We have proclaimed to you in this House many times that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. We have told you that the heavenly Father is willing to receive returning sinners. That He delights in mercy. That He is free to blot out sin. We have told you that the blood of Christ can make the filthiest clean, that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. We have urged you to flee away like doves to Jesus wounds.

The power of the Spirit of God has led many of you to come to Him, and you are saved! But alas, there still remains a multitude who are unsaved. Well, if you perish it is not because Christ has not been taught in your streets. You will go down to Hell, some of you, with the light shining on your eyelids, but with your eyes willfully closed against it. You will perish with the voice of Mercy ringing in your earsand in Hell you will be awful monuments to the justice of God who will then say to you, You sinned against light and knowledge, and against love and mercy.

If they perish who despised Moses law, how shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation? May the Holy Spirit now, with mighty energy, apply the precious blood of Jesus to every hearer, and unto God shall be glory world without end. Amen.

*Blessed Savior, at Your feet I lie,   
Here to receive a cure or die.   
But Grace forbids that painful fear,   
Almighty Grace, which triumphs here.   
You will withdraw the poisoned dart,   
Bind up and heal the wounded heart.   
With blooming health my face adorn,   
And change the gloomy night to morn.*

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GOOD CHEER FROM FORGIVEN SIN   
NO. 3016

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1906. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***And, behold they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.***

**Matthew 9:2.**

***And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come near unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you.   
Mark 2:3-5.***

***And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because***

***of the multitude, they went upon the housetop and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when He saw their faith, He said unto Him, Son, your sins are forgiven you. Luke 5:18-20.***

[Other sermons upon this miracle are as followsNo. 2,337, Volume 39, THE PHYSICIAN PARDONS HIS PALSIED PATIENT and No. 2,417, Volume 41, FIRST FORGIVENESS, THEN HEALING Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THIS man was paralyzed in body, but he was very far from being paralyzed in mind. From the little we know of him, he would appear to have been earnest, resolute, energetic and persevering. You very seldom find persons attempting more for you than you, yourself, desireand if the four men who carried this paralytic person were so zealous in getting him under the Lords notice, we may be morally certain that he, himself, was even more set upon it. His bearers would never have gone the length of breaking up the roof and letting him down upon the heads of the crowd unless he had urged them to do so. He was something more than passive under such heroic treatment! If he did not suggest the plan, he evidently entered into it most willingly.

Suppose it to be your own case, my dear Hearer. Are you not persuaded that if, broken in spirit, you were to say to your friends, let me alone, my case is hopeless, few would dream of exciting themselves to desperate efforts on your behalf, but would let you lie in your apathy, according to your request? It is a rule that you must, yourself, be energetic if you are to make other people energetic on your behalf and, therefore, it seems to me that this man had a resolute and intense spiritand had such influence over his friends that he inspired them by his eagerness, having first won them by his importunity. He besought them to aid him in what had become a necessity of lifehe must see Jesus. He must be brought before the great Healing One, somehow or other, and because of his personal eagerness and pressing importunity, his friends made up their minds to help him.

We may yet discover a little more about this palsied man and it will not be mere conjecture, for, by certain rules established by observation and experience, we may often learn much of a character from very small circumstances. Our Lord Jesus was accustomed to address the persons who came to Him very much according to their mental condition. When one poor man, half imbecile in spirit, was brought to him, He asked him, Will you be made whole? He was so listless as barely to have the will to be restored and Christs saying, Will you be made whole? is evidence to us that even the poor creatures wishes had begun to slumber. Take it as a general rule that while Christ regarded the onlookers and spoke with some view to them, yet, in the main, His first thoughts were concerning His patient and He generally spoke with an eye to that patients case. I gather, therefore, from the fact that Jesus said to this man, Son, be of good cheer, that he was very greatly depressed in spirit and unhappy and when He added not, Your palsy shall be removed, but Your sins are forgiven you, we are quite safe in concluding that the cause of the mans sadness was his sin, for which beyond all things else he desired pardon! Our Lord went straight to the root of the mischiefthe man was sad, and so He cheered him. The man was sad about his sin and so He granted him forgiveness. His palsy would, secondarily, be a fountain of bitter grief to the sick man and, therefore, the Savior dealt with it in the second place. But first and foremost, over and above all grief for his infirmity, was his painful sense of unforgiven sin. It is not likely that he told his bearers about that, for they might not have been able to sympathize with such a spiritual necessityto them he spoke of his affliction, not of his repentance, for while they would pity him for his palsy, they might have ridiculed him for his guilty conscience. The Lord, however, knew the hearts grief without tellingHe read it in the sufferers looks. The great Sin-Forgiver knew right well that earnest gaze which meant, Be merciful to me, a sinner, and He met that wistful glance with a smile and the cheering words, Son, your sins are forgiven you.

I suppose that the patient was a young man, for the word, Son, would hardly have been spoken by our Lord to a man older than Himself. I gather that he was a man of childlike faith, for Jesus did not call people His sons and daughters unless there was something of the childlike spirit about them. He was evidently a man of simple-hearted faith who fully believed that Christ could forgive his sin and so it happened to him, after the rule of the Kingdom, According to your faith, be it unto you.

The case stood thusThe paralyzed man was burdened with sin, weighed down and oppressed in conscience. This urged him to seek the Savior. I must see the Christ, he said. His passionate earnestness extracts a promise from the neighbors that they will take him to Jesus. He begs them to do it now. But the Lord could not be reached, for a dense crowd shut Him in. I must see Jesus, cries the man. His friends reply, You cannot rise from your bed. Carry me upon it, cries he. But we cannot get in. Try, he says. They reached the door and they cried, Make room. Here is a man sick of the palsy who must see Jesus. They are gruffly answered, Plenty of other poor men want to see Him. Why should everybody give place to you? What is the use of pushing? There is no room for that bed here! What folly to drag a sick man into all this pressure and heat! The Prophet is speakingyou will interrupt Him. Away with you! The bearers cannot enter. They plead and they push, but all in vain.

Then, cries the resolute man, take me up the back stairs. Get me to the top of the verandah and let down the bed through the ceiling. Run any risk for I must get to Jesus. Possibly his friends object and state the difficulties of the procedure suggested. Why, says one, you will be hanging over the peoples heads, for there will be no room for you when we let you down. Try it, he cries. If I am let down from the top, there will be no fear of my not reaching the ground! They cannot push me up again, or keep me on their heads! They must make room for me. His earnestness having been ingenious, now becomes infectious! His bearers smile at his eagerness and enter into it with zest. He will give them no rest till his desire is accomplishedand so they break up the tiling, and let him down before Jesus, with the glad result described in the Gospel, Jesus said to him, Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.

We have before us, first, a doctrinethe doctrine that it is one of the grandest comforts in the world to have your sins forgiven you! Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you. Secondly, we have before us a question. May everyone of you have the honesty to ask it and to answer it in your own case. The questionHave I had my sins forgiven me? For, if so, I have a right to be of good cheer and to be as merry as the birds in spring. But if not, I am destitute of the greatest comfort which Christ, Himself, can speak to a sinners heart.

I. Dear Hearer, let us give our hearts at once to THE DOCTRINE. It is plainly taught us here that the pardon of sin is one of the richest comforts which the Lord can give to a man.

It is so, first, because the pardon of sin removes the heaviest sorrow which a man can feel. Some know little about this grief. May the Lord cause them to mourn with broken hearts or they will perish in their sins! Those of us who have known the burden of sin can tell you that it is a crushing load. Thoughtful persons who have seen things in their true lighthonest persons who refuse to be flattered, pure-minded people who long to be right with Godall these will tell you that a sense of sin is, of all miseries, the most sharp and disquieting. To know that you have sinned against light and knowledge with special aggravations is as a hot iron to the flesh and as a serpents venom in the blood. There is no rest day or night to a soul which carries this Hell within it

*Sin, like a venomous disease   
Infests our vital blood!   
The only balm is Sovereign Grace,   
And the Physician God.*

I speak what I know from personal experience and I only say what many a hearer knows, too, within his own soul. Once let conviction flash in upon the soul and the world loses its fascinationsthe music hall, the ballroom and the theater are robbed of their enchantmentseven business wearies and domestic joys are deprived of sweetness. A sense of sin spoils all. Guilt on the conscience hangs over everything like a funeral pall. It drowns all music with its prophetic knell and withers every green herb beneath its burning feet.

Sin, sinwhat direr ill than you are, can even Satan, himself, beget? A man infected with a deadly disease is never at ease. Whatever garments he may put on, or at whatever tables he may feast, he is still unhappy because he has the arrows of death sticking in him! Such is a man conscious of sin. Nothing can please him. Nothing can ease him till his sin is removed. But when sin is gonewhen he knows that he is pardoned, he is as a bird set free from its cage!

A great fire raged one night in a village and a large thatched mansion, in which a man of God resided, caught fire. It blazed furiously, but he and his wife and the most of his children escaped. Judge of their horror when they counted them over, to discover that one little one was missing. Nothing would content them while that dear child was in the burning house. Mr. Wesley, his neighbor might say, we have saved your chest of drawers. We have saved your valuable books from the house. Ah, but, the good man would have said, my boy is in danger. What his wife thought of it, when she recollected that little John would be burned to death, I need not tell you. But when, at last, he was lifted out of the window and brought to his parents armsthen be sure that the good man would gather his whole family about him and bless the Lord, even though all his substance was consumed. Now, when a sensible mans soul is in danger, nothing can content him. He prospers in business, his happy children play around himbut what of these while his soul remains in deadly peril? When once, through pardoned sin, his soul becomes like a brand plucked from the burning, then his daily troubles lose all their weight and his heart is full of joyful song! It is clear to every experienced man that the pardon of sin is an immense comfort because it removes the bitterest cause of distress and alarm.

Next, forgiveness of sin is a comfort of the first order, for, indeed, it is altogether indispensable. You may possess every luxury, but you cannot be solidly happy until sin is forgiven. Why! says one, I am really happy and yet I am not pardoned. Yes, but it is a remarkable thing that happy people of your kind are never pleased while they are quiet. They must get up an excitement and dance, or fiddle, or drink, or play the fool in some sortor they are not happy. I call that real happiness which I can enjoy by the hour together in my room, alone, calmly looking into things and feeling content. I call that real joy which I feel when I wake up at night and, though full of pain, can lie still and bless God for His goodness. It was said of old, Philosophers can be merry without music and so can the saints of God! But the ungodly, as a rule, cannot enjoy themselves without external objects to raise their spirits. The truly happy man is satisfied from himself. A spring within him of Living Water quenches his thirst so that he never feels the drought.

A man cannot be really happy till his sin is pardoned, because sin brings, more or less, a sense of condemnation. Picture a man in the condemned cell. Try to make him comfortable. We provide him with a dainty supper, we sing him gladsome glee, we exhibit fine pictures to himbut he is condemned to die tomorrow and he loathes our feast and our fineries. Bring in a thousand pounds and make him a present of it. He looks at the golden sovereigns and he says, What is the use of these to me? Tell him that a rich man has left him heir to a wide estate. Yes, he says, but how can I enjoy it? I am condemned to die. He is always in his dreams hearing his death-knell and picturing to himself the dreary scene when he is to be launched into eternity. If you could only whisper in his ear, Her Majesty has granted you a free pardon, he would say, You may take away the feast, I feel too happy to eat! All the gold in the world could not make me more delighted than I am now, as a pardoned man. When men have come out of prison, after they have been shut up for years, everything has been a joy to them. Though they went home, perhaps, and found everybody dead whom they once knew, and saw their own hair turned gray through having lain so long in a moldy den, yet the sweets of liberty made the stones of the streets shine as if they were made of gold and the fields seemed like fairyland to them! Such is the joy of pardon when it comes from our God. A man must have forgiveness, or else everything will be emptiness to himbut when he is absolved, he goes forth with joy and is led forth with peace!

Pardon of sins makes all our sorrows light . If a condemned man is permitted to live, he will not ask whether he is to live like a gentleman or like a peasant. When some kind-hearted men struggle to get the life of a condemned criminal spared, the mans friends think of nothing but his life. When a judge sentences a man to penal servitude for life, it may be thought a hard sentence, but you never hear of complaints when a condemned criminal has his life sparedif we find that he is to be kept a prisoner as long as he lives. The heaviest punishment seems nothing if life is spared. You heave a sigh of relief to think that the gallows will bear one less sad fruit and you forget all about the servitude or the imprisonment which the convict will have to endure. So, depend upon it, if you get sin pardoned and so are saved from the eternal wrath of God, you will make no bargain with God whether you have meat to eat and raiment to put on, or are left hungry and naked! No, Lord, I will shiver in a beggars rags with full content if I am but pardoned. I will dwell in prison with a dry crust for my food if I am but delivered from Your wrath! Thus it is clear that the blotting out of sin takes the sting from every other sorrow.

Let me add that it makes death, itself, light! I remember the story of a felon, in those days when they used to hang people for very little, indeed. A poor man, who had committed some offense, was condemned to die. While he lay waiting for the sentence, the Lord sent a choice minister of the Gospel to him and his heart was enlightened so that he found Christ. As he was on the way to the gallows, what, do you think, was this mans cry? He was overwhelmed with joy and, lifting up his hands, he said many times, Oh, He is a great Forgiver! He is a great Forgiver! Death was no terror now that he had found forgiveness through Jesus Christ! Poverty repines not when sin is removed! Sickness frets no longer when conscience is at ease! It may cost you many a pang to feel yourself melting away in consumption, but what does it matter, now that your transgression is forgiven? Every breath may be a labor, every pulse may be a pang, but when sin is forgiven, the Lord has created such a spring of joy within the heart that the soul can never faint!

Yet again, dear Friend, remember that the pardon of sin is the guarantee of every other blessing. When Christ said, Your sins are forgiven you, was there any question at all as to whether that paralytic man would be healed? Certainly not, for the love which had forgiven the sufferers sin was there to prompt the Savior to say afterwards, Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house. So, dear Friend, if your sin is pardoned, it is true concerning you that no good thing will God withhold from you who walk uprightly, and that all things work together for good to you who love God, to you who are the called according to His purpose. Everything between here and Heaven is secured by the Covenant of Grace for your best benefit. And you can sing

*If sin is pardoned, Im secure!   
Death has no sting beside   
The Law gives sin its damning power   
But Christ, my Ransom, died.*

You shall never have a need but God will assuredly supply it since He has already bestowed on you the major blessingthe all-comprehending blessing of forgiveness! Covenant mercies follow each other like the links of a chainWho forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles. Do you think that God forgives men their sins and then leaves them to perish? Such cruel mercy would be more worthy of a demon than of the Deity! Pardon is the pledge of everlasting love and the pledge will never be forfeited!

Alas, cries one, perhaps, after the Lord has forgiven me, He may yet turn again and punish me! ListenThe gifts and calling of God are without repentance. That is, God never repents of what He does in the way of Grace. If He forgives, He forgives once and for all and forever! It would be blasphemy to represent God as making a transient truce with men instead of an eternal peace! The Lord casts the iniquities of His people into the depths of the sea and their transgressions He remembers against them no more forever. Is not this a blessed act of Grace? It secures the removal of all the evil results of sin and is the guarantee of all that will be needed this side of Heaven, yes, and of Glory, forever! If you do but hear Jesus say, Your sins are forgiven you, you may also hear Him say, Be of good cheer, for there is everything in the fact of pardon to make your heart dance for joy!

We will not linger longer upon the doctrine, but make our meditation personally practical by pressing home the work of self-examination. II. So, now, let us consider THE QUESTION, Are you forgiven? Has God, for Christs sake, forgiven you? Ah, cries one, do not judge

us! I shall not attempt to do so, but I would beg you to judge yourselves. We cannot be sure of our salvation, answers another. Can you not? Then you ought to never be happy, for a man who is in doubt about a matter so vital as this, which involves his all, ought never to enjoy a moments peace! How can we rest in fear of Hell, in danger of eternal wrath? Do you not long for certainties? A great novelist began a favorite story with the sentence, What I need is facts. In that short sentence, he expressed the longing of many a thoughtful soulmany of us feel that we need indisputable facts. Our proverb has it, Fast bind, fast find. Prudent men will take double care about this weightiest of all concerns and will not be content till they are infallibly cured. I will help you to answer this question by remarking that there is a way by which we may know if we are not forgiven.

We may know that we are not forgiven if we have never felt that we need forgiveness. Where guilt has never been perceived, it has never been removed. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If I feel that I am as good as most people and, perhaps, a little better. If I try to justify myself and think of gaining Heaven by my own endeavors, then I am under condemnation! God has never healed the man who was never wounded, nor has He made the man alive who was never dead. If you have never been humbled before God so as to acknowledge your sinnership, then you are still abiding under His wrath. Think of that, I pray you, you who are at ease, wrapping yourself about in the garments of your own merits! Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, you may be sure that, in Gods sight, you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Dear Friend, I hope it is not so with you.

Again, he has never been forgiven who does not at this moment hate sin. Jesus never came to save us in our sins, but to save us from our sinsand wherever He takes away the guilt of sin, He also kills the love of it. Sin never seems so black as when we see it put away by Jesus blood. At the sight of the Cross, we grow angry with ourselves for having slain our Lord by our transgressions. Never dream that you can be pardoned and then be allowed to live as you did beforethe very wish to do so would show that you were still under condemnation.

Again, you are not forgiven if you have never sought Christ and His atoning blood. If you have labored by other means to procure mercy, you have not found it, for no one else can give it but the one appointed Mediator. Can your priest grant you pardon? Did you offend the priest? Then the priest can forgive you for offending him, but he cannot forgive you for offending God! None but God in Christ Jesus can blot out sin and you must go to Himand if you do not, you are not forgiven, whatever you may dream.

Once more, have you forgiven everybody else? This is a home question to some minds, but remember how necessary it is to answer it. If you do not forgive everyone his brother his trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you. There it stands, Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. If you cannot pardon everyone, no matter how grievous the offense, neither has God pardoned you. A malicious heart is an unrenewed heart. A revengeful spirit is clean contrary to the Spirit of God who passes by transgression, iniquity and sin. This Truth of God may be little preached, but Holy Scripture makes it very prominent and you will be most unwise if in any measure you ignore it. You are not forgiven if you cannot forgive!

Let me now help you, by some positive test, to see whether you are forgiven. Only one is neededyou are pardoned if you are a true Believer in Jesus Christ. It is written, Jesus seeing their faiththat is, the faith of the four bearers, and the faith of the man who lay upon the bedsaid unto him, Your sins are forgiven you. The poor palsied man so believed in Jesus that his very face beamed with confidence when he came into Christs Presence and so Jesus, seeing his faith, said to him, Your sins are forgiven you. Do you believe in Jesus? I know that you believe that Jesus Christ is God and a great Savior, but is this a mere matter of doctrine to you, or do you really believe in him? You know what it is to believe in a man so that you can trust him and leave your affairs in his handsdo you believe in Jesus in this way? That is the faith which saves. When a man believes in Christ so as to commit himself to Christ for salvation, he believes rightly, for believing is but another word for trusting, relying, depending upon!

Do not trifle with this question. It is my hope that you can answer, Yes, unless I am awfully deceived, I am trusting the blood and merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I am so trusting Him that I endeavor to follow in His footsteps and to copy His example. Then you are saved, for there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. Dwell on that word, Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God. If you really trust Christ, though you have only done so during the last hour, your transgressions are put away and your iniquity is covered, for He immediately pardons them who come to Him. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If you have confessed your sin to Him and trusted in Him, you are most assuredly cleansed by His blood!

Now for my last word. It is this. Jesus said, Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you. Come, then, let us be of good cheer for our sins are forgiven. Let us be happy. Let us be merry in the Lord. Let us begin to sing for very joy of hearts because our sins are forgiven us for Christs sake! We are very poor, but our sin is forgiven us. We are very weak, but our sin is forgiven us. We are, perhaps, getting very old, and near to our end, but our sin is forgiven us. We are full of infirmity and vexed with temptations, but our sin is forgiven us for His names sake! Son, be of good cheer, said the Savior, and shall we be otherwise? What if our room is a very small onewhat does it matterif our sin is forgiven? Ah, but there is a sick one at home! Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you. You know how the Master, when the disciples found another source of joy, turned them back to this, Notwithstanding in this, rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven. And so, when you find a multitude of troubles, follow the same good advice!

Does someone say, I am head over heels in trouble, for I am in great straits? Let me lay my hand upon your shoulder and say, Brother, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you. Oh, but I have very little to live upon! True, but you have this comforting message, Your sins are forgiven you. Be of good cheeryour Lord bids you to be so, for your sins are forgiven you!

If you are not happy, it will be disobedience to Christ, for He commands you to be of good cheer. It will look as if you did not value the blessing that cost Him His blood. Your sins are forgiven you. It cost Him His life to buy you this redemptionare you going to groan when you get it? No doubt you are pleased to give good things to poor persons and, if so, you like to see their gratitude. I gave something, not many days ago, to a man and he just put it in his pocket and walked off without a word, as if he would say, I thought you would have given me at least ten times as much. I thought, If I had seen the way you would take it, my Man, I would not have been in such a hurry with your gift. When you give your children a little treat, you like to see them pleased and thankful. But if they sit down and fret over your kindness, you are disappointed and are in no great haste to indulge them again! Our Heavenly Fathers gifts must be valued and delighted inif He has forgiven us our sins, let us be happy!

Son, be of good cheer. Have some regard to the outside world, for, if they are pardoned men and women with gruesome countenances, they will infer that there is not much comfort in the Grace of God, after all. My wife, says one, declares that her sins are forgiven her, yet I am sure when there is a little trouble in the house she is more downhearted than I am. There, cries a woman, my husband tells me that his sins are washed away, but he grumbles and murmurs till we are all made miserable by him! Do not let it be so. If you have a cross to carry, let us bear it joyfully for Christs sake. If we have work to do for Christ, let us do it with delight. Let us live to music. Let us march to Heaven to a gladsome tune, rejoicing in the Lord because our sins are forgiven! And let each one of us say

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

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MARK 2.**

Verse 10. And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was heard that He was in the house. And straightaway many were gathered together, so that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the word unto them. It is a very singular fact that although man, in his natural state of heart, is opposed to the Gospel, yet he is drawn to hear it. Even though he abhors it, yet oftentimes he cannot help listening to it. Wherever Jesus Christ is, whether He is present in Person, or in the preaching of the Word, it will be certain to be heard abroad and multitudes will come to hear. The grandest attraction either in or out of Heaven is still the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ!

3-5. And they came unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And then they could not come near unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you. In Lukes account of this gathering, we read that the power of the Lord was present to heal them, and when we ask, Why was that power so remarkably present? we think that one reason was because there were persons present who were anxious about the good of others. And, today, wherever four persons come together praying for some poor soul, you may rest assured that the power of the Lord will there be present to heal. I do not think that so much of the success of sermons depends upon the preacher as upon those model hearers who are all the while praying for a blessing and who are making other members of the congregationthose who are convertedthe constant subject of their supplication. Christ blessed this man because of the faith of the four who carried him and, possibly, because of his own faith.

Notice that our Lord did not at first say to the sick man, You are healed of your palsy, but He said, Your sins are forgiven you. This was laying the axe at the root, because sin is at the bottom of sorrowand where sin is pardoned, even the effects of sin will be removed.

6-9. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts. Why does this Man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason you these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and take up your bed, and walk? Whichever is spoken, Omnipotence is implied. The Presence and Power of God, alone, could give efficacy to either sentence, but to Him, the one is as easy as the other.

10-14. But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, (He said to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto you, Arise, and take up your bed, and go your way into your house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all, so that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying they never saw anything like this before. And He went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them. And as He passed by, He saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of customs, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed him. There is a change in the method of displaying Christs power, but His power is always the same. To the palsied man, He said Arise, and take up your bed, and walk. But to the man engaged in a calling which degraded him, Christ said, Follow Me and, he arose and followed Him. Blessed be God, we still have in our midst the living Lord who is as able to work miracles of mercy today as when He was upon the earth! And we have not merely to exhort, to persuade and to entreat, though we have to do all that, but we have also to speak with authority in the name of this glorious Son of God and to command men to repent and believe in Him! He is with us, by His Spirit, to make His Word mighty, so that, to this day, palsied men do arise and walkand sinful men are led to turn from evil and to follow Christ.

15-17. And it came to pass, that as Jesus sat at meat in Levis house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples: for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto Jesus disciples, How is it that He eats and drinks with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, He said unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. For ordinary Christians to associate with those who are like the publicans and sinners of Christs day might be dangerous, for, evil communications corrupt good manners, and Christians should be careful as to the company in which they are found. But for Christians to go among such people to try to do them good is Christlike! The Church of Christ always fails in her duty when she looks upon any class of persons as being beneath her observation, or too far gone for her to reach. Our Lords mission was to find out and to supply the needs of mankindand He seems to have paid particular attention to the very worst of men because they needed Him the most. And His Church should always be guided in her choice of work by the necessity of the objects that need her care. And Brothers, you and I who are in the ministry will do well to choose not that sphere in which we may be most happy and comfortable, but that one in which we are most needed. If I were a lamp and had my choice of where I would be hung, I should prefer to be hung up in the darkest place in London where I could be of most service. And I think that everyone of us would make just such a choice if we judged rightly and desired to be where we were needed and to do as the Savior did when He was on the earth.

18-20. And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and said unto Him, why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. While Christ was with His people in Person, they could not help having joy and gladness. But when He was gone from them, they must lament His absence.

21, 22. No one sews a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up takes away from the old and the tear is made worse. And no man puts new wine into old bottles: else the new wine does burst the bottles and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles. The bottles were made of skin and the wine put into them must be of a suitable port. To prescribe fasting to His disciples while He was making them glad with His personal Presence would have been incongruous and absurd. And there are some things that we ought not to expect from young Christiansand other things that we ought not to expect from old and mature Christians. We should not expect to find new wine in old bottles, nor old wine in new bottles. A place for everything, and everything in its place, is not only a rule for the home and the merchants counting house, but it is also a rule which should be observed in the Church of Christ, for God, as a God of order, always puts things in their proper places and in due order.

23. And it came to pass, that He went through the corn fields on the Sabbath; and the disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. They had offended the Pharisees by not fasting and now they were offending them again in a similar way, though with reference to a different matter!

24. And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath that which is not lawful? According to some Rabbis, you might pick an ear of wheat on the Sabbath, but if you rubbed it between your hands, they said that was a sort of thieving which was a kind of labor that must not be performed on the Sabbath. They made all sorts of ingenious restrictions, too ridiculous for us to quote. These disciples were, therefore, according to them, chargeable with sin because they had plucked ears of corn and had performed the operation of threshing them on the Sabbath. And we have some of that sort of folk living now who take the smallest matter, which is altogether insignificant, and in which there is neither good nor harm, and magnify and distort itand then make a man a grave offender all for next to nothing. We have learned not to be very much troubled by anything that they choose to say.

25-28. And He said unto them, have you ever read what David did, when he had fled, and was hungry? He and they that were with him? How he went into the House of God in the days of Abiather the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath. He has made it to be no longer a day of bondage, but a day of blessed rest and holy service for God! Works of necessity, works of piety and works of mercy are not only allowed to be done, but are commanded to be done upon the Sabbath.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2417 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

FIRST FORGIVENESS, THEN HEALING

NO. 2417

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS DAY, JUNE 16, 1895. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 2, 1887.

**When He saw their faith, He said to him, Man, your sins are forgiven you. Luke 5:20.**

I HAVE read to you the narrative of the healing of the man taken with the palsy and many of you remember that, last Sabbath evening, I preached upon the Pharisees and the doctors of the Law who were sitting by [Sermon #1991, Volume 33Sitting ByRead/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org . ] I tried to represent the position of many in our congregations who are just sitting by. I preached to the outsiders of the congregation on the divers reasons which led to this, sitting by. I must confess that I did not reckon on so large a blessing as I have already seen as the result of that sermon. When I came here on Monday afternoon, that being Whit-Monday, when everybody is supposed to take a holiday, I was surprised, on my arrival at about three oclock, by a friend running up to me and saying, We are glad you have come, Sir, for there is already a room full. There is quite a nice number of friends who have come forward from the congregation and who, one after another have said, We cannot be sitting by any longer. We feel that we cannot remain among the sitters-by, but that we must come in and partake of the Gospel feast and join ourselves with the disciples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This blessed result of my sermon has set the bells of my heart ringing all the week and I have felt deeply thankful to God for it. I said to myself that as I had taken one arrow, which had sped so well, out of that quiver, I would take another! Having spoken to those who are sitting by, I think I will now speak to those who are not sitting by, but who, indeed, are the principal persons in the congregation, namely, those who are sick and sorry and who need the Savior. For this palsied man who was let down by ropes through the ceiling was the most remarkable person in that congregation! We may readily forget those Pharisees and learned legal gentlemen, but we can never forget this man to whom, as soon as ever they let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus, the Savior said, Man, your sins are forgiven you. I trust that, at this time, there are some present in this audience who are not sitting by, but who are already praying, God be merciful to me! Some whose prayers are rising to Heaven in accents like these, Lord, help me! Lord, save, or I perish!

You are the principal persons in the congregation, both to the preacher and to the preachers Master! He cares more about you and about what shall take place in you, than about any of the Pharisees or doctors of the Law who may be sitting by. God is glorified in scattering His miracles of mercy where there is the greatest need of them. Our Lord Jesus, when the poor man was let down by his four friends through the ceiling, said to him at once, Man, your sins are forgiven you. Matthew puts our Saviors words thus, Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you, while Marks record is, Son, your sins are forgiven you. Well, Jesus may have uttered all of these words and all the different versions of the story may be correct, for it is not every mans ear that catches the whole of every sentence that is spoken, and we may be glad that there are three Evangelists who have recorded what the Savior said. There is no real difference in the senseand the difference in the words may only show that Jesus said all three sentences.

I am going, on this occasion, to talk a little about this man, first, before his forgiveness. Next, a little more about his forgiveness, itself. And then a little about what followed after his forgiveness.

I. First, then, let us think of this man BEFORE HIS FORGIVENESS. We are not told much about him. If I indulge in imagination a little, you will take it for what it is worth. This man, it seems to me, first, had faith which went out towards the Lord Jesus. Evidently, as I read the narrative, he had been suddenly paralyzed. This affliction usually comes up all of a suddenmen who have been about their business as actively as usual have been, in a moment, struck down with paralysis. This man appears to have been completely paralyzed, so as to have been unable to move and, as he lay in that helpless state, he heard that Jesus of Nazareth had come to the cityand he believed that Jesus of Nazareth was able to heal even him. It does not strike me that his friends would have brought him to Christ unless he requested it. The most rational explanation of the whole proceeding seems to me to be thishe believed in Jesus as able to heal him and he continued to cry out earnestlyand to pray that he might, somehow or other, be taken into Christs Presence. He could not stir hand or foot, but he had friendsand he begged those friends to take him to Jesus.

Well now, there never was a soul, yet, that had faith in Christ but what Christ revealed Himself more fully in the way of love to that soul! If you know that you can not save yourself. If you believe that Christ can save you and if your one anxiety is to be laid at His feet that He may look upon you, and save you, He will assuredly accept you. Him that comes to Me, He says, I will in no wise cast out. Whether he comes running, or walking, or creeping, or borne of four, so long as he comes, Christ will accept him! And if his faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, our Lord Jesus will not let it die! If there is but a smoldering faith, He will not quench the smoking flax. Do you believe this? If you do, let it cheer you and comfort you. There is already something that is well with your soul! It was better to be paralyzed and to have faith in Christ than to be walking upright like the Pharisees and lawyers who had no faith in Him! The apparent wretchedness of your condition is not the real wretchedness of itit may even turn out to be the blessedness and the hopefulness of it! If you believe in Jesus, I care not how far you have fallen, or how great is your inabilityif you believe in Jesus, you are brought into contact with Omnipotence and that Omnipotence will heal you!   
This man, I believe, further thought that Christ could heal him, but he began to feel his great sinfulness. I am certain that he did because Jesus never forgives where there is no repentance. There was never yet the flat, Your sins are forgiven you, until, first, there was a consciousness of sin and a confession of sin. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This man, lying there paralyzed, wept at the thought of his past life, his omissions and his commissions, his falling short and his transgressions! His heart was heavy within him. He seemed to say to his friends, Get me, somehow, to the great Prophet! Get me within sight of this wonderful Savior! Oh, get me within a touch of Him, that I may be restored, that I may have this great load which presses me down so sorely, taken off my heart! Worse to me, even, than the paralysis is this awful sense of sin. Take me, oh, take me into the Presence of this Messiah, this Son of David, that He may have mercy upon me! That I conceive to have been his condition before the Word of Pardon was spoken to him.   
Next, being hopeful, himself, he inspired those about him with hope. Of course they would not have taken him to Christ if they had not had some sort of belief that, possibly, he might be healed. It is wonderful what sick people can do even when they can do nothinghow, when they seem to be utterly powerlessthey find a strength in feebleness. Their very helplessness seems to be a plea where there is anything of generosity left in the heart of those who are near them. So this man pleaded, I believe Jesus will heal me. I believe He will have mercy upon meget me to Him, do get me to Him!   
They resolved to do it if they could and he was willing to be carried to Christ. Four stout stalwart men said, Yes, we will get you to Him, somehow, though it is a difficult task, for the house is small, the room is crowded and there is sure to be a press about the door. But, said the poor man, oh, try to do it, for it is my only hope. If I could but get where Jesus could see me, He would look on me and save me. Oh, get me to Him, get me to Him! The palsied man would make no dispute about how it was to be done, so they carried him to the door of the house. And then they said to the people crowding around, Make way for this poor palsied man, and he would say, I pray you, friends and neighbors, make way. But they would not. Perhaps they, too, had their friends who needed to be healed, or they, themselves, had an anxiety to hear the great Teacher, so they pushed and pressed to get as near Him as they could. You see, those quibbling Pharisees and doctors of the Law had got in, first, and they blocked up the road. They are always in a poor sinners way! What must be done? The poor mans bearers would have abandoned the task, I think, but he said, No, do not give up trying to get me in! It is my only hope. Oh, get me to Him! Get me near Him!   
So, next, the man was willing to be lowered into the Presence of Christ. There was no other way but to go up those stairs outside the house and to take him to the roof. And he, not fearing as many would have done, said, Yes, break it up and let me down. These four men, belonging to a fishing town, were adept in the use of ropes and they soon had their tackle ready and broke a way through the roof. As I told you in the reading [See Exposition at end of sermonEd.] I always feel pleased at the idea of the dust and the debris of the roof coming down upon the heads of the Pharisees and doctors of the Law! It always delights me to think that those gentlemen would have dust on their heads, for once, and since they were there, they were bound to have a little of it. Of course, when these gentlemen come to a place of worship, one feels bound to be respectful to them, but if they come at an untimely hour when there is any rough work going on, one does not feel any particular regret! If, when souls are being saved, these gentlemen should have their corns trodden upon, we do not even ask their pardon or make any apology! Such a work as Christ had to do could not stand still for the sake of reverence to the learned doctors of the Law! so the roof was broken up and this man, though paralyzed, was not afraid to be let down. It is probable that there were no outcries from him when they began to let him down. I think, if it had been my case, I might have been afraid that one rope would go a little faster than the other. But no, the man keeps still in his mingled paralysis and courage till down drops the pallet just before the Savior!   
There he lies upon his mattress, on the floor of the house, just before the Saviors eyes, exactly where he wanted to be. Here I address myself to some who would give all that they have if they could but be brought under the eyes of Jesus. The one thought of such a sufferer is, Oh, that I could be near Him! Oh, that I could be near Him! Oh, that He would look on me, cure my helplessness and pardon my sin! What a wonderful picture this scene would make! The crowd is obliged to make way or else they will have to bear the man and his bed on their headsso he is dropped down into their midstand there he lies. The great Preacher has been preaching, but He stops. This is an interruption which is, indeed, no interruption to Him! His discourse is but broken off for a minute, to be illustrated with engravings, that men may see, in later years, that what they have heard is but the letter-press and that the miracle which is now to be worked shall be the engraving which shall convey the Teachers wonderful meaning to all eyes! So the poor palsied man lies there before the Savior.   
Is that where you desire to lie, dear Friend? In your deadly sorrow, sin and weakness, do you wish to lie at the Saviors feet? That is where I want you to lie and if you will to lie there, that is where you do lie. The Lord Jesus is in the midst of us, tonight, and you can at once cast yourself down before Him. Do so! Tell Him about your paralysis. Tell Him how sick you are, how sinful you are. No, you need not speak so that I can hear youHis ears will hear the whisper of your soul. Your heartbeats will be vocal to His heart and He will note all you say or feel in your inmost soul. Just lie before Jesus and as you lie there, what are you to do? This man did not speak a word, but, as I believe, he lay there repenting that ever he should have lived as he had done, mourning that he should have wasted his life and misspent his time. I think, too, that he lay there believing, looking at that wondrous Man and believing that all power was in Him, and that He had only to speak the word and the sinner would be, at once, forgiven! So he lay there, in the Presence of Jesus, hoping and expecting forgiveness and healing.   
II. Now, in the second place, we are to consider THE FORGIVENESS ITSELF.   
This poor paralyzed man had not lain there long before the blessed Master broke the silence and said to him, Man, your sins are forgiven you. I think that the four men up on the roof, looking down to see what would happen to their friend, would hardly understand what that sentence meant! They had brought him to Jesus because he was paralyzed, but he had wanted to come, first of all, because he was a sinner! He desired to have his paralysis cured, but secretly, in his soul, there was another matter which they might not have understood if he had tried to explain it to them. It was his sin that was his heaviest burden! And the Savior, the great Reader of Thoughts, knew all about that sin, so He did not, first, say to him, Rise up and walk, but He began by saying, Man, your sins are forgiven you.   
Observe that the pardon of sin came in a single sentence. He spoke and it was done. Jesus said Man, your sins are forgiven you, and they were forgiven him! Christs voice had such almighty power about it that He needed not to utter many words. There was no long lesson for the poor man to repeat. There was no intricate problem for him to work out in his mind. The Master said all that was required in that one sentence, Your sins are forgiven you. The burden of a sinner does not need two ticks of the clock for it to be removedswifter than the lightnings flash is that verdict of absolution which comes from the eternal lips when the sinner lies hoping, believing, repenting at the feet of Jesus! It was a single sentence which declared that the man was forgiven!   
Next, remember, that it was a sentence from One who was authorized to absolve. He was sent by the Father on purpose to forgive sinand do not imagine that He has now lost His authorization to forgivefor, He has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Jesus is appointed as High Priest on purpose that He may stand on Gods behalf and declare the remission of sin. What Jesus said was spoken with Divine Authority. It is vain for a priest to say to a sinner, I absolve you. What can he do in such a case? He, or any other man who does not call himself a priest, may speak in his Masters name, and say to the penitent, If you do sincerely repent, if you truly believe, I know you are absolved and I comfort you with the assurance of this absolution. So far, so goodbut the Master, alone, can really give the absolutionit must come from Him who has power upon earth to forgive sins!

Now, my Hearer, have you never been forgiven? Are you in your pew and yet lying at that dear Masters feetand do you desire above all things that He should say to you, Your sins are forgiven you? And do you believe that He can say it? And will you accept it from Him as being by Divine Authority? If so, I think He says it to you, for in His own Word He declares that they who believe in Him are forgiven. He says to each one of those who are penitent and believe in His Grace, Your sins are forgiven you. Take the absolution and go your way! Do as Martin Luther did, in the days of his dark distress, when a brother monk said to him, Do you not believe in the Creed, and do you not say, I believe in the forgiveness of sins? Now believe in the forgiveness of sins for yourself. Trust Christs Word and you will be believing what is absolutely true! Trust it, take the comfort of it, and go your way! It is thus that Jesus Christ, by the preaching of the Gospel, and by the revealed Word of God, says authoritatively to each penitent, Man, your sins are forgiven you.   
Further, observe that this sentence, although it was but one, and was so short, yet was wonderfully comprehensiveMan, your sins are forgiven you. Not one sin alone, nor many sins, but all your sins are forgiven you. When you go into particulars, you are apt to leave something out, therefore the declaration is made all-inclusive, there are no particulars given. Your sins are forgiven you. Sins against the holy God? Sins against a righteous Law? Sins against the Gospel? Sins against the light of nature? Sins of this and sins of that kind? No, there is no enumeration. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. Man, your sins are forgiven you. Murder, adultery, theft, fornication, blasphemy? Yes, in a word, all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. Man, your sins are forgiven you. What a far-reaching pardon it is! Your sins are forgiven you. At one sudden sweep of the Divine wave of mercy, they are all washed away! There is no such thing as a half-pardon of sin. I heard someone talking, the other day, about original sin being forgiven, but the other sins left. But sin is a wholeit goes or it stays altogetherit cannot be broken up into pieces! It is all there or it is not there at alland it is not there if you believe in Jesus! This blessed and comprehensive sentence sets free from every jot and taint and stain of guiltMan, your sins are forgiven you.   
Observe, also, that this sentence contained no conditionsand the blessed Gospel, speaking to every repenting and believing sinner, gives him absolute forgiveness. Behold, the tally is destroyed, the record of your debt is nailed to the Cross! And as for your sins, they are like the Egyptians when the Red Sea swallowed them upthe depths have covered themthere is not one of them left, however great or many they may have been. If you are now a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, He says to you now by His Word, Man, your sins are forgiven you. I pray the blessed Master, by His Holy Spirit, to make His Word come home to many here with power. Oh, that those dear lips, which are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, did themselves speak to you! Oh, that those wounds of His which are mouths that preach pardon to sinners, might speak to you and say, Your sins are forgiven you! There is no mouth that speaks pardon like that gash in His side out of which His very heart speaks as He says, I have loved you, and given Myself to death for you. Your sins I have borne on the tree and put them away once and for all. Man, your sins are forgiven you. Oh, that Jesus Himself might thus speak effectually to many of you!   
But note that this sentence sufficed the receiver. When the Savior afterwards raised this palsied man to health and strength, He did not do it to let the man know that his sins were forgiven. The man knew that, already, and did not need any more evidence of it. But Jesus did it for another reason. To the scribes and Pharisees He said, That you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto you, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house. Those unbelieving men had not evidence enough that Christ could forgive, but he to whom Christ spoke needed no further proof than the power of that voice in his own conscience! And if He shall speak to you, my Hearer, you will not need any books about the evidences of Scripture, the proofs of Inspiration and so on, to youthis indisputable miracle of pardoned sin shall stand forever as a holy memorial of Gods mighty Grace! It shall be unto you for a sign, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off, that God has pardoned you and spoken peace to your souland this God shall be your God forever and ever! To every soul that is in a similar case as that of the poor palsied man lying repenting and believing at the feet of Jesus, His Word gives the comfortable assurance, Believe, and your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you. Believe it and go your way in peace!   
III. Now I close by noticing, thirdly, what followed AFTER THIS MANS FORGIVENESS.   
He was absolutely, irreversibly, eternally forgiven, for, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. He never plays fast and loose with men. He never issues a pardon from His Throne and afterwards executes the pardoned sinner! His pardon covers all that may come afterwards as well as all that has gone before. But what happened to this man?   
I believe that, first, there was an inward peace that stole over his soul. If you could have looked into the face of that palsied man, while still palsied and lying there in that hammock, you would have seen a wonderful transformation! Did you ever see a face transfigured? If you are a soulwinner, you have often seen it. All human faces are not beautifulsome are absolutely repulsive! The countenances of some who have lived long in sin are dreadful to look upon. Yet I have noticed faces that at first I could scarcely endure, when the persons have been gently led to the Savior, and they have perceived the love of God to them and have at last believed, and felt within their soul the kiss of peace, why, they have looked positively beautiful!   
I should have liked to have had them photographed, only it was too sacred a thing. Speak of physiognomiesthe Grace of God is such an eternal beautifier that the face from which you would have turned away in disgust and said, There can be no good thing behind that countenanceis absolutely changed by the Lords mighty working! I say not that a single feature may be alteredthe person may be the same in feature, but, oh, what a marvelous difference there is in the expression of the whole contour of the countenance when Free Grace and dying love have cast their magic spell over the spirit and the Holy Spirit has made the dead to live, and the person has been born again in Christ Jesus! Well, that change took place in this mans mind, I am sure it did, when Jesus said to him, Your sins are forgiven you. He was in no hurry to be raised from his palsied state! He does not appear to have said a word and those scribes and Pharisees looked on with their malevolent countenances, but they did not frighten himhe lay quite still and was in no hurry, even, for the Masters next blessing. It would come in due time, he knew it would, and he was of good cheer, for had not Jesus said to him, Be of good cheer, your sins be forgiven you?   
But next followed the mans immediate cure. The Master said to him, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house. Our blessed Master was accustomed to preach the Gospel in a way which I have heard some friends greatly question. They tell us that we ought not to bid men to believe and repent because they cannot. There are two parties on opposite sides of this questionone says, If you tell a man to believe and repent, that proves that he can, which I do not believe. And others say, If they cannot repent, you ought not to exhort them to do so, which I also do not believe! Though I know them to be as helpless as that poor palsied man, unable to lift hand or foot, yet in the Masters name we say, as the Master was known to say, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. Oh, says one, I could not say that to an unregenerate man. Do not do it, Brother, if you cannot do it. Go home and go to bedwhat is the use of you for such work? The man who can speak miracles is the one who is needed and the man who can speak as his Master has bid him speak!   
Surely, the faith does not lie in believing that the man can, himself, do what he is told to do! The faith lies in believing that Christ can do it and, therefore, speaking in Christs name, we say to the sinner just as the Lord Jesus did to the man with the withered hand, Stretch forth your hand, and he does so. Look at Ezekiel speaking to the dry bones in the valley. Ezekiel, do you believe that these dry bones can live? Not I, he says, I know that they are dead. The Lord says to him, Ezekiel, prophesy to these dry bones! How can he do it? It would be inconsistent with what he just said! I have nothing to do with that, he says, I was sent by the Lord to do it and I do it in the name of God. That which may seem perfectly inconsistent with your reason is quite consistent when faith brings in the supernatural element with which God moves those to whom He gives the commission to preach the Gospel in His name!  
The Savior said to this man, Arise, take up your couch, and go into your house. Now observe his precise obedience. Immediately he rose up before them all. The tendency of a paralyzed person is to be paralyzed in will. There are some persons, no doubt, who have ailments that can easily be cured if they believe they can be cured because there is not much the matter with them, after all. But this man was completely paralyzed, yet he so fully believed in Christ that up he rose and stood before the Master! Then Jesus said, Take up your couch. I think I see him undo those four ropes and quickly shoulder his mattress. Walk, says the Master, and he walks! Go into your house, says the Master. He might have stopped and said, No, Lord, let me stay and hear the sermon out, but no, not a word did he say about it, but off he went to his own house!

Oh, that all were as obedient to Christ as this man was, that, having the simplicity of faith, they would render the fullest obedience! But thus it often is that the very chief of sinners, when pardon is given to them, have given to them, at the same time, a tender conscience, a willing mind, a yielding spirit. Whatever He says to you, do it, said the virgin mother to the servants at Cana of Galileeand that is good advice for you! If Christ has healed you, obey Him! Obey Him at once, obey Him exactly, obey Him in everything, be it little, or be it great! If some say it is nonessential, remember that what is not essential to salvation may be essential to obedience! Do it if Jesus commanded it! Do it whether it appears to you to be essential or not! That is not a question for you to ask that is a heartless, loveless question. He has healed you, do what He bids you, as He bids you, when He bids youand raise no question about it. Take up your bed and go into your house, if so He bids you. Or, if He puts it to you, He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, believe and be baptized. Be obedient unto Him who deserves to be obeyed!   
Now, lastly, this man, it is said, immediately rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house glorifying God. I think I hear what he said. Glory! he cried, Glory be to God! He felt so glad, so happy, that he took up his bed before them all and, as he walked along, he glorified God. And would you not have done the same if you had been paralyzed and had been restored as he had been? And will you not do so? If you have been sin-bound and Christ has set you free, surely you will take the earliest opportunity of telling others what Jesus has done for you and seek to glorify His name! I did not wonder when a Brother lately said to me, I have been spending all the morning in the workshop telling the men that I have found the Savior. And one, last Sunday, turned to his wife in this Tabernacle and said, I am saved! She said to him, Dont disturb the worship, but I almost wish he had done so! What a mercy it is to be saved! Salvation puts a new sun in our sky and a new joy in our hearts! Believe on Jesus and this salvation is yours! God grant that it may be, for His dear Sons sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LUKE 5:12-26.**

Verse 12. And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy. As far gone with leprosy as he could bethoroughly tainted and eaten up with that loathsome disease.

12. Who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean. He felt that the difficulty lay in the will of Christ, not in His power. No other teacher would have looked at such a man! Everybody shrank from him, for he scattered defilement wherever he moved. A leper was a being from whom all kept clear, so this one was afraid that the great Teacher was not willing to cure him. If You will, he said, You canI know that You can make me clean.

13. And He put forth His hand, and touched him. This was a wonderful instance of condescending love on the part of the Lord Jesus and touching the leper did not defile Him. On the contrary, Christ removed the defilement from the leperHe touched him,

13. Saying, I will: be you clean. It was the will of Christ that worked the miracle, that secret movement of the heart of Christ, that silent Omnipotent going forth of Divine Energy that accomplished the lepers cure!

13. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. Christ can heal sin in the same way that He cured this leper. If He touches the worst man in this place, He can make sin to depart from him the moment He touches him. It does not require years in order to perfect the work of salvationit can be done in a moment! Such is the wonder-working power of Christimmediately the leprosy departed from him.

14. And He charged him to tell no man: but go, and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. Our blessed Master did not court fame. He did not wish to make Himself notoriousthe crowds that flocked around Him were inconvenient to Him, so He did not wish to have them increased. There was danger in such crowding and Jesus was wise in His generation, so He charged the healed leper to tell no man, but to show himself to the priest and to present the offering required under the Law.

15. But so much the more there went fame abroad of Him. Fame is like fire. If you heap anything on it to prevent it from spreading, it often acts as fuel to the flame! So, the very effort to hide the light of Christs power made it spread all the more widely.

15. And great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. I wish that all congregations would come together from the same motivesto hear and to be healed by Christ! What is your disease, my Hearer? What ails your soul? What is the mischief in your spirit? What is the malady in your heart? Jesus can heal you! Oh, that you would at once seek to be healed by Him!

16. And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed. Just when there were such grand opportunities of doing good, just when everybody sought Him, does He go away from them into the wilderness to pray? Yes, because He felt what we ought to feel but often do not, that He needed fresh power, that as the servant of God He must wait upon God for fresh power for His great life-work. He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed. No doubt it was the constant habit of Christ to pray, but there were certain special times when He retired into lonely places and His prayer was peculiarly fervent and prolonged.

17. And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. The word, them, scarcely gives the right sense of the original. It should be, the power of the Lord was present to heal. Jesus did not heal the Pharisees and doctors of the Law, but He healed many of the congregation. Now, how do you account for this power present to heal? Why, by that wilderness prayerHe withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed, and afterward, in a very high and remarkable manner, the power of the Lord was present to heal. And when the power to heal was present, the patient to be healed was very soon present, too!

18, 19. And behold, men brought on a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop and let him down through the tiling, with his couch, into the midst before Jesus. There appears to have been, according to Mark, some breaking up of the material that formed the roof of the house where Christ was. It was not altogether such an easy matter as some have imagined, to let this poor palsied man down into the Presence of Jesus. And if some of the dust from the roof fell down upon the Pharisees and doctors of the Law who were sitting by, it would only be what they were accustomed to throw into other peoples eyes!

20. And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you. Christ has eyes with which He can see faith. You and I cannot see it, but He canWhen He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you. This was going to the very root of his disease. Jesus knew what really ailed the manhe was palsied in spirit as well as in bodyand Christ removed the root of his disease by forgiving his sin.

21. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason. The gentlemen I alluded to, just now, began to reason. It was just like theminstead of beginning to praise God, they began to reason

22. Saying, Who is this, which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He, answering, said unto them, What reason you in your hearts? See, Jesus can perceive thoughts! I have heard of thought-readinghere is a true specimen of itJesus perceived their thoughts and said unto them, What reason you in your hearts?

23. Which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Rise up and walk? Anyone can say, Your sins are forgiven you, or, Rise up and walk. But to forgive sins, or to give the power to rise up and walk, equally needs God! If God is present and can make the palsied man arise and walk, He is also able to forgive his sins.

24-26. But that you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto you, Arise, and take up you couch, and go into your house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear. With awe, and reverence. They felt that God had come very near to them and they, perhaps, said, like Jacob of old, when he was afraid, How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven. They were filled with fear

26. Saying, We have seen strange things today. Oh, that we might see such strange things in this house, tonight, and whenever we meet to worship God!

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STRANGE THINGS   
NO. 2614

A SERMON   
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, MARCH 19, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 18, 1883.

**We have seen strange things today.   
Luke 5:26.**

THE world is growing very old, dull and commonplace. One takes the newspaper and, often, after glancing through it, has to say, There is really nothing in it. The reason probably being that there is nothing fresh or new happening on the earthit is the same old sad story of sin and sorrow constantly repeated. The world seems to be like a cluster from the vine when all its generous juice has been pressed out. Life, to many persons, has come to be excessively humdrum. The human mind is always craving after novelties and, to find these novelties, it makes much ado about nothing. It runs raving mad over that which is not worth thinking of and whips itself up into an intense excitement about a matter that is of no more importance than a drop in a bucket, or the small dust of the balance. The fact is, man wants something really fresh and strange and if he can get it, he feels delighted! I hardly think that when our good friend, Mr. John Ashworth, brought out his book, he would have achieved so great a success with it if he had not called it

Strange Tales. But the strangeness was the attraction. The stories in it were strange tales to the mass of mankind, though to some of us they are very familiar things but the strangeness was the point that attracted readers.

No man ever spent a day with Jesus Christ without being filled with the sight of strange things! No man ever entered into communion with the Lord Jesus without being delighted with wonders of love, of mercy, of Divine Grace, of the Truths of God, of goodness for, while His Gospel is the old, old Gospel, yet it always has a new face upon it and is continually fresh and newit never gets stale! We read of our Lord that when John saw Him, His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, to denote His antiquity. And yet the spouse said of Him, His locks are bushy and black as a raven, as if to indicate His perpetual youth, His unfailing strength and His unfading beauty. Believe me, dear Friends, if you want to see that which is truly strange, you must get into that spiritual realm where Christ is acknowledged as King, the new Heaven and new earth wherein dwell righteousness.

If you want to continue to be astounded, amazed, astonished, filled with holy awe, you must come and be familiar with the Savior, His person, His work, His offices and everything that has to do with Him and, when you have become familiar with all these things, then you will have to say constantly, We have seen strange things today. Something has occurred that has surprised even us who have grown used to surprises. Our Lord has seemed to outdone Himself, though we thought Him to be higher than the heavensand His mercy has appeared to go deeper than ever before, though we judged that it had already gone deeper than the abyss, itself! O world of wonders! I can say no less. He that enters this spiritual world where Christ is adored as God and King has unlocked a cabinet of marvels that shall astonish him during all his lifetime here and even throughout eternity! I am going to speak about strange things and I pray that God will make what is said to be of service to many.

I. First, I ask you to MARK THE STRANGE THINGS OF THAT PARTICULAR DAY which are mentioned in our text. It was so full of wonders that the people said, We have seen strange things today. Well, what did they see?

First, they had that day seen Christ disturbed in preaching, greatly disturbed, and yet delighted to be so disturbed and accepting the disturbance as part of His usual experience and the means of doing further good to men. The Lord Jesus has gone into the square covered court of a housethe people have pressed in behind Him, one after another, till they are packed in a dense massand there are still others around the door vainly trying to enter. Here come four menit is rather remarkable that there should be four such earnest menwho have brought a sick neighbor on his bed, with ropes tied to the four corners. But they find that they cannot get in through the crowd. They push, they squeeze, they struggle, but there is no getting in! And their poor paralyzed friend seems to be effectually shut out from Christ. They go up the outside stairs of the house. They get on the roof which covers the square where Christ and the people areand they begin ripping off the tiling! And now, look! The man is being let down by the four ropes right before the Saviors face! There must be some measure of dust, even if something still heavier does not come tumbling down upon the Preachers head, but here comes the bed with the man on it! The people are sure to make room for him, now, or else he will be supported on their heads! They seemed to be squeezed as tightly as they could be, but they feel that they must, somehow or other, get a little more closely together and so the man is gradually let down by his four friends who carefully let out the four ropes at the same rate, keeping good time together, lest one end of the bed should be too high and he should fall.

That must have been a great disturbance to our Lord! I know some preachers who cannot bear to have even a baby crying during the sermon. I do not feel especially delighted with that sweet music, yet I rejoice that the good woman did not stay away from the service! As far as I am concerned, she may bring her baby, even if it should sometimes cryI am glad to have her here that God may bless her. Perhaps a friend has just dropped his cane in the aisle and made a loud noise just when the preacher was trying to be very earnest. Well, that is a pity, but the dear Savior was much more rudely interrupted by all the falling stuff from the ceiling and the sick man coming down into the midst of the crowd before Him! If there had been any thread in His sermon, He certainly would have lost itbut His discourses were made of better material than that. They were made, indeed, of fire, and fell like fire-flakes on mens heads and hearts. He still spoke on, after He had paused a while to attend to this mans case, and He did attend to it very sweetly. He looked at the four men who had brought him and He saw that they had great trust in Him. And, seeing their faith, He worked the cure upon the sick man.

It was a strange thing that it should be so, but how much I would like to see more of this strange kind of work! I dont know where I am to find four men who are so in love with one of their friends that they will break up ceilings and roofs to get him where Christ can bless him! They will probably be four very imprudent and rash men, in the opinion of othersthe Lord bless the imprudent and the rash! They are generally the best sort of men for such a task as this. Your more prudent men would have stopped till the service was over and the people had come out and, very likely, they would have waited till Christ had gone out at another doorand so their friend would have missed Him. But these rash, headstrong, ardent lovers of their sick neighbor must somehow get him to Christ! So they break up the roof and there he is, right in the Presence of Christ! It was a strange thing to do, but, Brothers and Sisters, do not hesitate to do strange things in order to save souls! Hardly mind what you do, so long as you can get them to Christ. Your Lord will not blame you. He is so strangely lovingso strangely full of goodwill to menthat even should you be guilty of an indiscretion in your zeal, He will not upbraid you for it. Oh, labor for the souls of your children, your servants, your neighborsand the Lord will accept that service, and you may yet have the delight of seeing them made whole by Christ! That was a strange thing to begin with. I am bound to say that the people who witnessed it talked all their lives about the man coming down from the ceiling and Jesus Christ healing Him!

But now they saw a greater wonder than thatthe Christ of God forgiving this man his sins! We talk about the forgiveness of sins, I fear, rather glibly, without always realizing what a great thing it is. You know that when Martin Luther was in deep distress of soul, a good old monk said to him, Brother, can you not say the Credo? Yes, said Luther. Well, then, replied the old man, in the Credo you say, I believe in the forgiveness of sins. Yes, said Luther, I know that. I have often said it. Then, enquired the other, do you believe in the forgiveness of your own sin? For, if not, how can you say, I believe in the forgiveness of sins? This great Truth is sometimes spoken of as though forgiveness were an impalpable something that was done and yet not done, but Christ never meant it to be so. His death was not a shadowy, vague Atonement that might possibly be available for sinners, but a real and complete putting away of sin and, as many as believe in Him may know for sure that their sin is put away and is as completely gone as if it had actually ceased to be, seeing that Christ bore the punishment of it. Yes, and the sin, itself, was, by imputation, laid upon Him, as it is written, The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed.

Whenever a sinner has his sin forgiven, it is a strange, a wondrous thing! Never think of it as a mere commonplace matter of no account, for it is a marvel of marvels. The angelsa far nobler race than menfell from their first estate, but never has any of the devils bean pardoned for his rebellion against the Most High. No Savior has espoused their cause, no sacrifice has been offered for their guilt, no Gospel is ever proclaimed in their ears! When they sinned, they fell finally and now they are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Yet man, who was not a pure spirit, like the angels, but a spirit allied with materialism, an inferior being, felland for him God left His throne to come and bleed on earth to offer up an expiation! For men, sin became pardonable! No, more, to multitudes of the sons of men sin has been forgiven and an act of amnesty and oblivion has been passed concerning their rebellion! What a wonderful Truth of God is this! Whenever you feel a sense of pardoned sin, or whenever you know that your fellow man has received absolution from the great High Priest, the Son of God, you may at once say, We have seen strange things today.

When these people around our Lord had seen that wonder, they saw something else which must have greatly surprised themthey saw an exhibition of thought-reading. I have heard and read many curious things about thought-reading. Some I have believed, and some I have not. That any man can read my thoughts, I shall take leave to question! At any rate, he may read this thought, for I will tell him what is on my mindthat I do not believe him! But our Lord Jesus Christ, as He looked at the Pharisees and the scribes, read their unexpressed thoughts and, at once, saw what was passing within their minds! It was not an easy thing, I should think, to read thoughts like these, Who is this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God, alone? But our Lord Jesus read those thoughts and answered them, though the men before Him had not as yet spoken a single word! I have seen wonderful exhibitions of thought-reading in this Tabernaclenot by me, but by the Lord Himself! Many of you are witnesses of how I have uttered from this platform the very words you have spoken when you were coming here and what you said in your bedchamber, where nobody heard, perhaps, but some one companion, has been repeated in this place and you have been astounded as you discovered that the Word of God, which is quick and powerful, searches the heart and cuts asunder, just as you have seen an animal split from head to foot by a butcher and its innermost parts laid bare to the view of every passerby!

The Word of God often does thatdiscovers the secret thoughts and intents of the heart and makes the man see himself as God sees him and makes him stand astonished that it should be so! We have frequently seen this sort of thing happen as we sometimes tell to one another some of the extraordinary instances in which mens very flesh has seemed to creep as the things they said and did have been made known to them. It will probably happen in like manner to many othersand those to whom God will thus speak will say, as these people didWe have seen strange things today.

There was another strange thing they saw and, with that, I will conclude this first part of my discourse. They saw a sick man who could not lift hand or foot made, in a single moment, to walk and carry his bed, at the word of the Lord, Jesus Christ! That must have been a strange sight to those who knew this poor paralyzed man, when they saw him stand up from the bed and glorify God as he did what Jesus bade him do. And when the Lord speaks with power to a soul, as He constantly does, and the man who knew not God learns to know Him, and the one who feared not the Lord is brought to trust and love and serve Him, what a marvelous thing it is! I sometimes wonder whether any person would doubt the Inspiration of Scripture and the Divine origin and power of the Gospel if he could live each day as I live and see what I see of the wonders that are worked by the Gospel. Last Sunday night there came into Exeter Hall a man who did not care for the things of God, but he sat and heard the sermon. His brother had brought himand was praying earnestly for him. As he was going out, a friend, who had observed him during the service, said to this man who had entered the hall utterly careless and Christless, You were interested in the sermon tonight, were you not? I was, he answered, very much. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? The man at once replied, I do believe in Him with all my heart and all my soul. His brother, who was with him, and who had been praying over him, said, I was astonished beyond measure to hear him make such a declaration of his faith!

Beside that one, there were 12 other persons who came forward when the service was over and distinctly declared that they had found the Savior that night under the preaching of the Gospel. Though they had not been religious people, and had scarcely ever thought of their souls, yet God had found them! And these strange things do not occur with us, alonethey happen every day with our beloved friends, Moody and Sankey and, indeed, in a great measure, with all who preach the Gospel! It is its own evidence of its almighty power and, as it wins its way, men are saved, they are healed of the deadly paralysis of sin and made to leap with active obedience and joyful service in the cause of Christ! Whenever you see this miracle of mercy worked, you can say, We have seen strange things today.

II. Now, with great brevity, I ask you TO MARK THE STRANGE THINGS OF CHRISTS DAY.

If you had ever beheld our Lords life and work with the eyes of faith, you must have seen many strange things. First, the Maker of men became a Man! He that is Infinite became an InfantHe that made all things was wrapped in swaddling clothes! He who fills all space was laid in a manger and the Son of the Highest was known as the Son of Mary! We have heard strange things when we have heard the Doctrine of the Incarnation! The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth. Truly, this was a strange thing!

Further, He who was Lord of All, became Servant of All! Being found in fashion as a Man, He lived a life of perfect obedience to His Fathers will and went about healing the sick, raising the dead and ministering to all who came near Him. Most marvelous of all, on Him who knew no sin, the sin of man was laid, and the righteous God meted out to Him, the Innocent One, the chastisement due to the guilty! This is the ground of our hope and the only foundation of hope for sinners, that He, the innocent Christ, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. But what a wonder it is! The guilty go free because He who is free from guilt suffers in their place! Tell all men that wonder of wonders!

Yet that was not all. Jesus died on the Cross! And loving friends laid Him in the tomb. Death had conquered Him, but, in that moment, Death was conquered

*He Death by dying slew.*   
That day He led Death, itself, captive to His own supremacy. Wonder of wondersDeath put to death by death! Jesus Christ, by His dying, puts dying out of the way for all His people. Yet, even that wonder is not the last. Look, there He lies, for a while, wrapped in the grave clothes and Death appears to have the mastery over Him. But that Scripture must be fulfilledYou will not leave My soul in Hades; neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption. He must wait there till the appointed hour strikes and then, early in the morning, before the break of day, He was up and away! An angel rolled away the stone, for He that had been dead was alive, again, and Jesus left the abode of Death, no more to die! What a wonder it is that He who was dead worked out our resurrection! And now, since He rose from the grave, so all His followers must.

You may take what point you please in the history of the Lord Jesus Christ and, if you really understand it, you will say concerning every part of it, We have seen strange things in this matter. It is a chain of miracles! It is like Alps on Alps and more than that, for the mountains of mercy tower above the stars and reach even to the Throne of God and God, Himself, was never more lofty and glorious than when He was occupied in the stupendous labors of His Son Jesus Christ. Only spend your time in the company of the great Wonder-Worker, and you will continually be able to say, We have seen strange things today.

III. Now I must close by asking you to MARK THE STRANGE THINGS STILL TO BE SEEN IN THOSE IN WHOM CHRIST WORKS. If He comes and blesses us, we shall often say, We have seen strange things today.

First, we have seen a self-condemned sinner justified by Christ. I can tell you what I saw, one day, and I never shall forget the sight throughout eternity! I saw a sinner whom I know right welland I can say no good of him, but much, very much that is evil, without at all slandering him. He had been proud and haughty in his opinion of himself, but there shone a light into his soul which unveiled to him his deep corruption and depravity, the sin that mixed with all his best things, and the still more dreadful sin that fermented in his worst things. I saw that sinnerfor I know him wellself-condemned. He wrote his own sentence and he handed it to the Judge. He said that he deserved to be cast away forever from the Presence of God and the Glory of His power. And, as he passed up his own death-warrant, he dropped a tear upon it and he said, I now trust myself to the Sovereign Mercy of God in Christ Jesus. I remember it well and I saw that self-condemned sinner pardoned in a moment! The Lord said to him, Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven, and his face changed from darkness and gloom into shining light and joy! And he has never lost the impression of that blessed dayand, as he stands here to tell you the story, he can truly say that he saw strange things that day! But, Brothers and Sisters, there are hosts of you who have undergone the same blessed operation! Self-condemnation brought you where the Savior absolved you and, though it seems so easy to talk about it now, oh, how blessed it was when first we felt it! My heart did leap for joy! I was never so happy before and I sometimes think that I have scarcely ever been quite as jubilant as I was on that day of holy excitement and exhilaration!

I remember, also, a natural heart renewed by Divine Grace. I have gone into my garden and I have seen a great number of trees that have new branches which have been grafted into them, but I never yet saw a tree get a new heart. I have seen it get new bark and many changes have happened to it, but it cannot change its heart. There are some living creatures that shed their claws and grow fresh ones, but I never heard of a living creature that grew a new heart. That must be a strange, a wondrous thing, to change the very center and source of life! Yet the Lord Jesus Christ is constantly doing itgiving men new motives, new desires, new wishes, new habitschanging them entirely and, especially, creating in them new hearts and right spirits! Whenever you see that miracle of Grace worked, you can say. We have seen strange things today. A woman came to see me and cast herself down at my feet. She said that she had been such a sinner that she was not fit to speak with me. I bade her rise, for I said I, also, was a sinner. And she told me what she had beenI will not tell you the sad story, for I should have to use words of shame if I described her. But she is among us now, washed and sanctifiedand she delights to serve her God and honor and glorify Him! What changed that woman? Was it fear? No, she was a brave spirit who would have dared any kind of devil, but the Grace of God changed and transformed her, and made her into a loving servant of the living Savior. Oh, whenever we see this deed of Grace doneand we see it continuallywe say, We have seen strange things today.

Another marvel is, a soul preserved in spiritual life amid killing evils. Did you ever see a bush burn and yet not be consumed? Did you ever see a spark float in the sea and yet not be quenched? Many persons here are, to themselves, just such wonders. They are living godly lives in the midst of temptationholy in the midst of impurityserving God in spite of all opposition. These are strange things!

Did you ever see evil turned into good? There are many of Gods children who constantly see it. All things work together for good to them who love God. They are made rich by poverty, made healthy by sickness, made strong by weakness, made alive by killing, made to go up by going down! You who live the new life know the meaning of these paradoxes and understand how these strange things make up a Christians progress to the Eternal City of God. Strange things do the people of God see in their own lives as they find Heaven on earth! It is a singular thing for anyone to be on earth and yet in Heaven, but we have proved it to be so! We have seen men sick and we have seen men dyingand yet as full of bliss as they could hold, as thankful in their room of povertyand almost as joyful, as if they had been among the angels before the Throne of God above! There are surprises all the way along the road to Glory, but what will it be when we come to the end of it?

Did you ever try to picture the first half-hour in Heaven? Have you ever thought of the sensations that will pass through you in the first few days there? I think that we can very well judge what they will be, for they have been revealed to us by the Spirit. We shall have the same joys as we have here, only carried to a far higher pitch, for the life of God in Heaven is the life of God in the heart on earth! Heaven is but the outgrowth of a holy consecrated life and he that lives with Christ below is already in the lower chamber of the Fathers House. He has but to climb a pair of stairs and be in the upper chamber where all the glorified meet together with their Lord! Still, I doubt not that it will be passing strange to go from earth into Glory.

Whenever I begin to talk about this matter, I always wonder who will be the first among us to be called away, for it happens every week that some out of our great congregation go Home. Sometimes, in a single week, six or seven of our Church members go to the great Fathers Housewhose turn will it be to go next? We have not the choice, otherwise some of us might venture to put in an early claim that we might enjoy our rest. I know some old folk and some sick ones, and some who are greatly beset by Satan, and some who are sorely troubled with doubts and fears who would gladly say, Would God it were time for us to go! Well, dear Friends, rest assured that you are not forgottenthe messenger will come to you, perhaps soon, and he will say to you, By tomorrow, you shall see the King in His Glory. You will have to go down into the floodto cross the dark river, as they call itbut I do not believe that it is dark at all. I have seen the light shining on the faces of many of the pilgrims as they have looked back at me, when I have stood upon the rivers brink to comfort themand it has not seemed at all dark. The happiest company I ever keep is that of dying saints! I come away right merry, sometimes, from their bedside, for they say to me, O dear Pastor, the Truth of God you preach is good to live upon and good to die upon!

I saw a man and his wife, both of them very ill, lying in bed, together, but not a syllable of sympathy did they appear to need from me. And they seemed delighted to say to me, We learned Christ from your lips. We have lived on the Gospel you preached and it holds us up, now that we are lying here. We are glad to go home to Heavenwe are full of life and full of immortality even now! Oh, yes, these are strange things except to those who form part of this strange company with God, who is, to many, a stranger in His own world, and with Christ, who is a stranger, sometimes, in His own Church! We can say, and we shall say at the close of our lives, We have seen strange things today.

There is one strange sight which I wish that you, dear Friends, if you are unconverted, would look uponI wish that you would see Jesus as your own Savior. He is not far from any one of you. O look, look, look at Him and, as you look at Him, you shall live! That is Gods appointed way of salvation. Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth. And, dear Heart, if you should see that strange beingyourselfa saved sinner, I would like you to see another strange sight, namely, all your family saved! It will be such joy to you to have your wife rejoicing in Christ with you, joining in your daily prayer, and your children, even in their childhood, loving their fathers God. There is a text for you to lay hold of, supposing that you are not yet converted. It was the middle of the night when, in Philippi, the jail began to rock to and fro. The jailers house was up above, and he knew that he had two strange prisoners down in the vaults below. They had been singing in the night and the other prisoners had heard them and, as the jail rocked and reeled, and the doors flew open, the jailer, a stern Roman legionary, thought that his prisoners must have escaped and that he would be put to death for allowing it.

So he was about to thrust his sword into his own heart, but Paul shouted to him, Do yourself no harm, for we are all here. Then, when a light was brought, that man fell down before Paul and Silas and said to them, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they answered, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house. Do not leave out those last three words, and your house. Do not seek your own salvation without that of your household, also! Look up the passage in Acts 16:31-34Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house. And they spoke to him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

It was a midnight service and Baptism of the whole household upon a profession of their faith! God send you a like blessing! You will see strange things, then! Many of us have seen already them in our families and we hope to see them repeated a thousand times! The Lord give you, every one, a personal blessing, and then bless your households, also, for Christs sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LUKE 5:12-32.**

Verse 12. And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold, a man full of leprosy. What a contrast there was between these two personsthe Lord Jesus full of purityand this man full of impurityfull of leprosy! He could not be more than full. He had as much leprosy as a man could contain.

12. Who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean. This was splendid faith! Here was adoration of the noblest kind! No angel before the Throne of God could render the Son of God more honor than this poor leprous man did. He believed in Christs power at once to rid him of that otherwise incurable disease. Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.

13. And He put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be you clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. This is what Christ can also do in the spiritual realm. If a man is full of sin, let him but fall down on his face before Jesus and say, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean, and the Lord will put out His hand, touch him, and he will be clean in a moment. Immediately, not needing the lapse of a single hourimmediately the leprosy departed from him.

14. And He charged him to tell no man but go, and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. As long as the Ceremonial Law was in force, Christ very diligently obeyed it and bade others do the same. That Law is now abolished and the Jewish priesthood has also ceased to be. But mark the modesty of our Savior. As Man, He sought no fame or honor, but, as far as He could do so, He suppressed the voices that would have brought Him notoriety. Yet grateful tongues could not all be silenced, even at His bidding.

15. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. There was s double attraction about the Lord JesusHis sweet, instructive speech, and His gracious, healing hand. There is a still somewhat similar attraction in every true Gospel ministry, not the attraction of the mere words of human eloquence, but in the Truths of God which every faithful minister preaches and in that matchless soul-healing power which goes with the Word wherever it is believingly heard.

16. And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed. That is just what you and I would probably not have done under such circumstances. We would have said, We must seize this golden opportunity of publishing our message. There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to plenitude of blessing and we must take advantage of it. But our Savior did not wish for fame, He cared nothing about excitement and popularity, so, He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed for more of that real power which touches the hearts of men so as to save them, caring nothing for that power which merely attracts a crowd and excites momentary attention. O servant of God, when you are best succeeding in your service, imitate your Lord withdraw yourself and pray!

17. And it came to pass on a certain days, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which had come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. To heal the people? Yes, and to heal the doctors, too! And that was a far more difficult thing than to heal the ordinary folk. It must have been a time of great mercy and favor when Christ was ready to bless even the Pharisees and doctors of the law who were sitting by.

18. And, beholdFor it was a great wonder   
18. Men brought in a bed, a man which was taken with palsy. A paralyzed man.   
18, 19. And they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop. There was, no doubt, a staircase outside, as there usually is to Eastern houses. They went upon the housetop,  
19-21. And let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? Most true, O Pharisees and, therefore, He is God, for He can forgive sins and He has forgiven this poor sinner!   
22, 23. But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He, answering, said unto them, What reason you in your hearts? Whether it is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, rise up and walk? Does not each of these require the same Divine power? If I am able to bid him rise up and walk, I am also able, by the same Divine authority, to forgive his sins.

24-26. But that you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto you, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house. And immediately he rose up before them and took up that on which he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear. With a reverent awe!   
26, 27. Saying, We have seen strange things today. And after these things He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom. This Levi, or Matthew, was a tax collector. Not like those of our own day, but one who collected the taxes for the Roman governor and made what he could for himself out of them. At least that is what many of the publicans did.   
27, 28. And He said unto him, Follow Me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him. This was just a parallel case to that of curing the palsied manit is precisely the same morally as the other was physically. The office of a publican was disreputable in the eyes of the Jews, and this Levi was probably making fast money at the cost of his own countrymen. He was morally paralyzed as the other man was physically, but as soon as Christ said to him, Follow Me, he left all, rose up, and followed Him.   
29, 30. And Levi made Him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But the scribes and Pharisees murmured against His disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners? It seems that there can never be a great wonder worked by Christ without somebody or other objecting to it! I suppose that the sun never rises without annoying thieves who would like a longer time to perpetrate their deeds of darkness. And no miracle of mercy is ever worked without somebody finding fault with it for some reason or other. Be not dismayed, therefore, now that in these modern days there have arisen many cunning objectors to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let them object to it, as the dog barks at the moonthe moon still shines on in her silver brightness! So, when all objectors shall have howled themselves to silence, the eternal Gospel will shine on with never-failing splendor. These scribes and Pharisees murmured against Christs disciples and said to them, Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners? Their Master did not leave them to defend themselves, but He took the case into His own hands.   
31. And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are wholeSuch as you scribes and Pharisees claim to be   
31. Need not a physician; but they that are sick. You regard them as sick and I regard them in the same way and, therefore, am I found where these sick ones are. Why should I turn aside from them to insult you, who are so wonderfully healthy and think yourselves so good?   
32*.* I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

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PATIENTS FOR THE GREAT PHYSICIAN   
NO. 2835

A SERMON   
INTENDED FOR READING ON HOSPITAL SUNDAY.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1863.

**And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. Luke 5:31.**

IF you had never heard that passage before, you would be almost certain to know where to look for it. It must be in the Gospel according to Luke, for Luke was the beloved physician and, therefore, while taking notes of our Saviors discourses, he would be able to record anything that would be likely to strike upon a physicians ear and to be stamped upon his memory. Matthew and Mark also record this saying of our Lord, but Luke would have special reasons for mentioning it.

What a noble answer this was to the insinuations of Christs enemies! He was sitting down with publicans and sinnersthey had been invited to a feast by Levi, that is, Matthew. The scribes and Pharisees shrugged their shoulders and said they could very readily guess what kind of character Jesus of Nazareth was, for a man is known by the company he keeps. What an overwhelming reply Christ gave them! Where should I be, the Physician of Souls seems to say, but with those who most need My services? I need not come into your company, for you consider yourselves to be whole. But these publicans and sinners are, according to your way of speaking, to be regarded as sickwhere should I be but with those who need to be healed? Christ, in associating with sinners, did not at all condone their sin. When He proved Himself to be the Friend of publicans and sinners, it was not that He would lessen the infinite distance between Divine Perfection and human guilt, but only that, coming down to mans fallen estate, He might lift him up. Touching his leprosy, He might heal himand coming into the hospital of sick souls, He might there work His great miracles of mercy!

But, turning from the immediate occasion when these words were uttered and coming to the words, themselves, it appears, from our text, that Jesus Christ is the Great Physician and, just as we see our doctors hurrying through the streets, going from one house to another on their errands of mercy, so let us go with Christ, in the chariot of His Love, and let us visit some of the sick souls He has come to heal.

I. This will be our first businessTO VISIT THE SICK MAN AND ASK HIM A FEW QUESTIONS.

First, we will ask the man who is sick, but whom Christ comes to heal, what kind of disease it is from which he is suffering. If he is rightly instructed, if he understands the Truth of God, he will tell us that it is the worst disease there is. Other diseases may possibly be cured by men, but this one can never be cured except by Divine interposition. Some diseases, like fire, expire when they have burned out their fuel, but this one is of such a character that unless it is cured by Sovereign Grace, it will destroy both body and soul in Hell. This is the worst of diseases because it does not merely affect us in one point, but it affects the entire system from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. It is so foul a disease that even the all-merciful God is so disgusted with it that He found it imperatively necessary that Hell should be made that He might shut sin up there, as in a morgue, when it came to the worst state. We might better bear to have the plague and the black pest let loose upon us than unbridled sin! It is the foulest disease in the sight of God and it is the most dreadful in its consequences to man.

Our patient, if he is further asked as to the nature of his disease, will tell you that it is internal, but that it works itself out externally   
*The leprosy lies deep within.*

The sin which Christ came to heal is not something on the skin, or a mere matter of custom, or habit. No, my Brothers and Sisters, the venom of sin is in the very fountain of our being! It has poisoned our heart. It is in the very marrow of our bones and is as natural to us as anything that belongs to us. You might even tear the man in pieces, but you could not tear his sin from him. The Mohammed legend tells us that Mohammed was so pure because an angel had taken out his heart and wrung two black drops of evil out of it. Those who believe that lie, little understand the great Truth that what is needed is to get out of a man every drop of evil, yes, that he must be made a new man before it is possible to destroy the disease that is in him! Two drops of evil, my Brothers and Sisters? It is far worse than that, for it is the whole man who is evilall his heart, all his naturethe venom is everywhere! There is not, in unrenewed human nature, a place where you could put the point of a pin where it is not defiled with sin! It is in our entire systemwe have been lying in it until we are steeped through and through with it. Sin, in human nature, is like those colors that are ingrainedthe more you wash the material, the more clearly they are discovered! You can never wash them outonly the precious blood of Jesus can wash out mans sin.

We bend down over our patient and ask him another question How did you get this disease? He answers, I got it as diseases are generally gotten. I had it in three ways. First, by inheritance. Doubtless, many persons inherit certain diseases from their birth and we have all inherited sin from our birth. David expressly says and he, certainly, was no worse than others, Behold, I was shapen in iniquity. That old-fashioned Doctrinethat sin is bred in usagainst which some people kick so ferociously, is true for all their kicking! And what is bred in the bones will come out in the flesh sooner or later. We were born of a traitor and traitors were we born.

Nor have we merely received sin by inheritance. Sin is contagious and we have caught it from our fellow men. Many sins, which, perhaps, we might not otherwise have fallen into, we have acquired through our association with other sinners. Hence the value of early Christian training. Hence the blessedness of being found in the company of the godly. Surely you know, O Man, that this worlds very air is full of fumes and laden with the germs of the plague, so you have acquired innumerable diseases of soul beside that which you have inherited from your fathers!

In addition to that, as some diseases result from intemperance and other forms of evil living, doubtless the disease which was naturally in each one of us has been fed by our transgression. We have grown worse than we originally were through that upon which our sin has fed. We have gone from bad to worse, from one iniquity to another, till folly has ripened into sin and sin has culminated in crime. Such is the state of unrenewed mandiseased even from his birth, catching more soul maladies from others, or acquiring them by his own evil deeds, our patient is, indeed, sicksick unto death!

Perhaps someone asks, Where is this disease of which you speak? I have already answered that question, but I will answer it again more fully. The disease of sin in you, my Hearer, for you are the patient of whom I speakis to be found everywhere! The eyes of your understanding are darkened so that you cannot see the things of God as God would have you see them. Your affections are perverted so that you love that which you should hate, and hate that which you should love. Your conscience, which should be the candle of the Lord shining within you, burns very dimly. Conscience is no more perfect than is any other power in man. I know that some people speak of conscience as though it were the vice regent of God, but it is no such thing! It is defiled and depraved like all the rest of our powers. As for the will, my Lord Will-be-Will, as Bunyan calls it, the Mayor of Mansoulit is a slave which boasts of freedom, but is never more in bondage than when it boasts of being free! Sinner, your very memory is prone to retain evil rather than good! It will keep the chaff, but let the wheat run through.

The refuse which floats down the stream finds a place of resting with youbut if goodly cedars come down from Lebanon, you lay not hold of them! The devils lies, lascivious songs, foul words, thoughtless jeersall these stick like burrs, but Gods gracious Word, an earnest Gospel discourse, a solemn hymnthese, alas, glide from you like oil down a block of marbleand you go your way and forget all about them. There is no power that you possess that has not the slime of the serpent upon it! O Satan, you have dashed down the palace of manhood! Stately are its columns, even while they lie amidst the rubbish where the grass grows and the owl hootsbut you have cast down every pillar, you have broken the shafts and laid the capitals in the mire. Ah, you foul fiend, you have made that to be a den of darkness which was once a place of light where holy angels and even God, Himself, could walk. How are you fallen, O Man, once a son of the morning, but now a child of darkness until God shall give you light!

The disease of sin is everywhere in the realm of manhood and it is all the more certainly proved to be everywhere because so many people cannot see it! This is why you cannot see sin in yourselvesit has made all the various faculties of your soul to mortify so that you cannot feel the pains which this mortal disease would otherwise have caused you. Thus your heart has lost any tenderness that it may have had, naturally, and your conscience is seared as with a hot iron so that it cannot warn you of the mischief within, but prophesies smooth thingswhile all is in a state of ruin, destruction and dismayand will be so forever unless God, by His Grace, shall work a miraculous change.

Perhaps someone asks, If the man is so diseased, what are the effects of his sickness? The usual effect of all sickness is that the mans strength declines and he begins to waste away. You do not ask a sick man to run a race. And we must not ask an unrenewed sinner to run the race of godliness. We do not expect the man who has long tossed upon the bed of pain, to march in the soldiers ranks and to fight battles. Nor can an unsaved sinner be valiant for God and His Truth. What a dreadful inability sin brings with it! That simple command of the Gospel, Believe, the sinner cannot obey of himself. He can no more repent and believe without the Holy Spirits aid, than he could create a world! And, unless Divine Grace gives him the power to obey the command which bids him to believe, he never will be able to believe. You have lost all strength, Sinner. You have brought yourself down to be as one dead and as they that sleep in the grave. Your inability is awful and this is the effect of your sin.

Moreover, this sickness not only brings weakness, but it also impairs the beauty of the frame. We see many persons walking along our streets, poor, pale, emaciated creatures. And others who bear upon their features the marks which they must carry to the graveof some dire disease which once made them its victims. Ah, Sinner, if you could but see yourself as God sees you, you would see that you have transformed that which was the image of God for loveliness into the image of Satan for horror! O Soul, if God should ever hold up His mirror to you and let you see yourself as you are by nature and by practice, too, you would be greatly alarmed, for there is no more dreadful sight out of Hell than that of a naked, unregenerate human heart! So, then, sin brings a marring of all beauty. And, besides this, it brings destruction of all comfort. Sick men cannot get peace and easethey toss from side to side, but find no rest in any position.

Many of you must confess that sin gives you no comfort. I know you fill your glasses and sing and shout that the ungodly are jolly good fellows, but they have nothing substantial to sustain their joys. I know that when you wake up at midnight, you are not at ease. I know that when you are on a lonely road, the falling of a leaf makes you start and the more you brag, the more cowardly does it prove you to be! The very man who blasphemes God the most is generally the one who is most afraid of God. Men do but use great swelling words of vanity and boasting that they may hide the fears that lurk within them, but which they are ashamed to admit. I believe there are no such superstitious people anywhere as those who pretend that they do not believe in a God. You may toil to find pleasure in sin, but you shall never discover it. The dregs of sin are always bitterthe cup may sparkle on the brimbut when you have drained it, there shall come satiety, woe and redness of the eyes. Rake all the dunghills of earth, but you will never find the jewel of peace with God! Go and work in all the worlds mines till you have utterly spent yourselves, but you shall find that you have wasted your strength for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not. Yes, sin is a sickness that robs us of comfort.

And, worst of all, it is a sickness that will end in deatha death that is something more than deathit is the second death, the death that never dies. What a contrast there is between life and death! Yet there is not half such a contrast between life and death as between the mere act of dying and the second death, the casting into the Lake of Fire! Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come! It were enough to make you start from your seats if you did but know what those four words mean! To die unrenewed, unpardonedto face a righteously angry God, to be made the target for all His arrows, to be torn in pieces in His hot displeasure, Sinnercan you bear even to think of this? Yet this is what your sickness will lead to unless the Great Physician, of whom I am presently to speak, shall come and heal you.

Having been to see the patient and having said so much concerning his disease, I wonder whether you are saying in your hearts, If this is true, there is great need of a Physician? For, if so, you have learned what is the very essence of the text. The only right a man has to Christ is his need of Him. If you have been brought into the condition I have been trying to describe, your need is extreme and, since you need the Great Physician, I am glad to tell you that He is here, ready to hear you. Lay hold of Him! Look to Him now! Christ Jesus is set before you in the Gospellook to Him and live!

II. Now we are going to stop at the door of ONE WHO REFUSES TO BE CALLED A PATIENT or to come into the list of sick folk at all.   
The sick have need of a physician, but those who are whole manifestly have no such need. Are there any whole people? Oh, no! All have need of the Great Physician and, therefore, we preach Christ to all. All are spiritually sick and, therefore, we entreat all to come unto Him who alone can heal them. But we have to deal with men as they look upon themselvesand there are some people who think that they are not sinners and who, therefore, do not need a Savior. Let me give you a description of some of them.   
There is a good woman, probably she is herewho says, I have brought up a large family. I am sure I was always kind to my children. My husband always said I was the best of wives. As for my neighbors, I have got up in the middle of the night to nurse them. If any of them ever had the fever, they always said, Send for Mrs. So-and-So, shell come to us. I always managed my household affairs so that I owed no man anything. Everybody respects me and I do not like being told by you, Sir, that I am as bad as you say. In fact, I do not believe that I ammany people say that I am about the best-hearted person in the parishand I think I am.   
Well now, dear Friend, I see that you are evidently one of these whole people, or one of those who think themselves whole. You do not need a Savior, so you shall not have one! But, as you will have no Savior to take you to Heaven, where will you go? Why, you and all your good works will go down to Hell unless you repent of this proud way of talking, for you are rebelling against God all the while that you are speaking thus! You have been very good to your children? Well, that is right, so let your children repay youGod does not owe you anything for that. You have also been very kind to your neighbors? That is goodwould that more were like you in that respect! But let your neighbors thank youGod owes you nothing for that. What did you ever do for God? Why, you have never done anything for Him since He made you! You preferred your children to Him and you thought it better to live to serve your neighbors than to live to serve your God! Oh, dear! What does all your fine righteousness prove to be as soon as we examine it? It is filthy rags! So throw it away, for, as long as you cling to it, you practically say that you have no need of a Savior and, having no need of a Savior, Christ does not come to you!   
I also know a good many people of the other sex, everyone of whom says, I never will believe that my nature is so bad as you say it is. I do not doubt that with some convicts, or other thoroughly bad-hearted fellows, it is as you say, but I do not believe that what you have said is true of all of us. Just look at me, Sir! I have large premises in the City. I like to conduct my business in an honorable mannernobody can say that I am overreaching. I have an old clerk, Sir, who has worked for me for 30 yearsask him whether I am not as kind a master as can be. My people at home like me very much. I subscribe to the Bible Society. I give a couple of guineas a year to a Ragged School. I have been in the habit of going to church or chapel ever since I was a ladI do not know that anybody can say much against me. I may have had a little too much wine after dinner once or twice, but that is nothing to be ashamed ofeverybody does that sometimes. So, Sir, I can say that your representation of me is not true.

Very well, Friend, I will take you at your own valuation. It seems, then, that you have no need of a physician, so Christs coming into the world could not have had any relation to you. Suppose you could get to Heaven on your theorydo you know what they would have to do for you? Why, they would have to build a new Heaven on purpose for you because all the people who have ever entered there say, We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. But there is no need to wash what is already cleanand your robes are, it seems, so uncommonly clean that they need no washing! If you could get into Heaven as you are, you would be able to sing to your own praise and glory forever! But, to tell you the truth, you will never get there as you are, for the only footing on which a man can go to Heaven is that of a humble acceptance of Gods Grace. Now, you are not humble! What you have just said proves to me that you are as proud as Lucifer and, certainly, you have not a right estimate of sin, or you would not have said just now. I have only done what everybody else does.   
Does it make a thing less sinful because everybody does it? It appears to me, dear Friend, that you do not know much about yourself and that if you would spend half as much time in taking stock of your own character as you do in the stock-taking up at those large premises in the city of which you are so proud, you would soon discover that you are spiritually bankrupt, that you cannot pay a single penny in the pound, much less 20 shillingsthat you have forgotten God up to this very day, that you have trampled on the blood of Christ by insisting upon it that you do not need itthat you have insulted Divine Wisdom by saying that it has provided what you do not require! You must admit that you have insulted Divine Justice and Truth, for both of these denounce you and condemn youand yet you say you do not deserve condemnation! O Man, the poorest soul that is trembling at the feet of Christ is in a more hopeful state than you are, with all your morality and all your boasted righteousness! Your only right to Christ lies in your need of Christ! But, according to your description of yourself, you evidently do not feel that you need Him. Very well, then, you have no right to Him and if you remain as you are, you will certainly perish in your sin!   
Possibly someone else says, Ah, Sir, I do not trust in my good works, for I have something better to trust to. When I was quite a little one, I was taken to church and the parson put some water on my faceI do not know whether there is anything about that in the Bible, by the way, but that made me a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heavenat least, so the Catechism says. And, a long while after that, I went to the church again and a bishop put his hands on my headI do not know what it all meant, and I had never felt anything very particularbut then they told me to come to the Communion and I did, and nobody ever refused me. I have heard that there is a great deal of meaning in coming to the Sacrament and I intend, when I get ill, to look into these matters a little more. But, for the present, I am quite satisfied with what our clergyman tells me. They do say that he is bit of a Puseyite, but we need not bother our heads about that. If we attend to the ordinance of the church, I daresay it will be all right with us.   
Well Friend, let me tell you plainly, in the name of the Most High, that your refuge is a refuge of lies and your confidence is a deception! If I speak to others of you and you tell me that you were immersed according to the Apostolic fashion, and that you come and commune at the Lords Table, and that you are trusting in this for salvation, I would say the same to youthat your hope is equally a lie!   
*Not all the outward forms on earth,   
Nor rites that God has given,   
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,   
Can raise a soul to Heaven!*   
If you rest on these things and think that you are whole as the result of having done so, then you practically say that you have no need of the Great Physician and, consequently, you have no claim upon Him for His aid. O Brothers and Sisters, our plea with Christ must be our wounds! That is His plea with His FatherHis wounds! And that must be our plea with Himour sins, our needs, our unrighteousnessnot our goodness, nor our resolves to be better! We must bring before the Lord our sins!   
But I am quite conscious, though I try to describe their cases as clearly as I can, that some who think themselves whole, will still escape. One will say, The preacher could not mean me. Perhaps your character has been accurately sketched, yet you say, The preacher could not mean me! I am such an honest and upright man! Do you mean to tell me, Sir, that I am to be saved in the same way as a chimney-sweep or a poor fallen woman? Yes, that is exactly what I mean! There is no other way to Heaven for you than there is for such people as you have mentioned. You must come just as the vilest of the vile comejust as empty-handed as they come, you, also, must come to Christand if you do, He will receive you.   
III. Our time has flown so rapidly that I can only speak briefly of THE PHYSICIAN.   
If anyone asks, What is His diploma? It is hereThe 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 broken-hearted. God the Father sent Him to heal sin-sick souls. Where did He study? He studied in the great hospital of human disease! For 33 years, He went about doing good.   
What practice has He had? He has had the most extensive practice that a physician could have. Millions of happy souls above have been cured by Him and millions here on earth have also been healed by Him and all of them will gladly speak His praises!   
If you want to know what His medicine is, I may tell you that He has two medicines. This is oneHe sent His word and healed themHis word of promise, His word of invitation, His word of command. But He also has another medicine. That is, His own blood. Unlike other physicians who give bitter potions to their patients, the great Physician drank all the medicine Himself!   
But you will ask, What is His fee? He gives healing without money and without price. You may ask, Where is His dispensary? To every creature under Heaven who trusts Him, Christ presents a free and complete cure. And you will ask, What are His hours? Any hour, and every hour, by night or by day. But you will say, Where can I find Him, Just wherever you are now sitting or standing, you can find Him if you will but breathe this prayer, God be merciful to Me a sinner. If you trust Him with your soul, then the honor of this great Physician is engaged to make a sure and certain cure of you. Blessed Physician, would that we had time and ability to speak of You and of the wonders You have worked! You can heal the vilest, the most diseased, the most helpless and hopeless of sinners!   
I want to conclude by earnestly inviting you to come to this Great Physician at once. I know that many of you will say that you are unworthy. That is true, but no one was ever saved because he was worthy. Even though you are unworthy, have you not a need of a Savior? And being conscious of such a need is all the fitness and worthiness He requires! If you need Christ, you are fit to come to Christ. If you need to have sin forgiven, you are a fit subject for Christ to deal with. You need not talk about your unworthiness, for Christ bids you come unto Him. Possibly you say that your case is such a very complicated one that you do not understand it yourselfbut He understands it. You cannot tie a knot of sin which Christ cannot untie! Christ can cure your disease whatever it is, even if it has become chronic with you. Christ can cure habitual sinners. He can cure the sin that was born with you and He can do it this very hour! He can make the drunkard sober in a moment. He can turn the very chief of transgressors from the error of his ways and set his feet in the right pathand that in a moment!   
The sin of twenty thousand yearsif it could be possible for anyone to have sinned so longHe can take away in a moment when we believe on Him! Well, but, says one, I am such an old sinner. I have read that a young lad of the age of 15 heard Mr. Flavel preach and, soon after, he moved to America and settled in a quiet village there. He lived 85 years after that, an unconverted man and, one day, sitting in the field, thinking, he remembered Mr. Flavels sermon and the earnest way in which he spoke. Old men often remember the things of their youth better than those of yesterday. What Mr. Flavel had preached 85 years before was blessed to that sinner over a hundred years oldand he sought and found mercy! And he lived some years after that to tell what Divine Love and faithfulness could do! You are not a hundred yet, but if you had wasted a whole century in sin, Gods Grace could enable you to begin another century walking in the paths of righteousness to your lifes end!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LUKE 5:1-32.**

Verses 1, 2. And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God, He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. Before folding them up, as if they intended to do no more with them just then, as they had been working all night in vain.

3. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simons, and prayed him that he would put out a little from the land. It is very difficult to speak effectively when the people come too close to the speaker and, sometimes, a little inconvenience like that may interfere with the flow of the speakers thoughts and words. Even the Savior seems to have felt that He needed a little breathing space between Himself and His audience.

3. And He sat down and taught the people out of the ship. That was what some people would have called an unconsecrated place, but Christs Presence consecrated it, as it does every place where He condescends to meet with us

*Wherere we seek Him, He is found,   
And every place is hallowed ground.*

4. Now when He had stopped speaking, He said unto Simon, launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. Whenever He borrows a pulpit, or anything else, He pays good interest for the loan! Christ will not be in even a boatmans debt. For every cup of cold water given to His disciples in His name the Master will take care to pay.

5. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net. Out of personal respect and obedience to Christ, having, perhaps, but a slender hope of any good coming of it, yet, nevertheless, he will let down the net.

6, 7. And when they had done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net broke. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. For they had launched out so far into the sea to scarcely to be within hearing, so they beckoned to their partners in the other shipand they rowed out to help them.

7. And they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. We can have too much of a good thing, yes, too much, even, of the best things, for our poor frail vessel cannot hold all that God would be willing to put into it.

8. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. Not knowing what he said, though he knew what he meantfeeling as if he, so sinful, had come too close to the Lord who was so gracious, so he must not dare to stay near Him. Have you never felt the same as that? If not, I think you have neither known your Lord, nor yourselves, for the knowledge of Christ, combined with the knowledge of ourselves, is sure to produce this holy shrinking in which we have no need for anyone to say to us, Take off your shoes for we are almost ready to take off our very body, for we can scarcely bear the Glory of the Presence of the Lord!

9, 10. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: and so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth you shall catch men. He seemed to imply that he should catch them after the same rate, too, and so he did, for the first throw of the net brought in 3,000 and very soon the number caught was increased to five thousand. That was good fishing by those first Gospel fishermen! Oh, that we could throw the net as they did!

11, 12. And when they had brought the ships to land, they forsook all and followed Him. and it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy. That is a characteristic touch of Luke, who, as a physician, with a glance of his eyes, took in the condition of the man, not as merely a leper, but as one full of leprosy.

12, 13. Who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord if You will, You can make me clean. And He put forth His hand, and touched him. The perfectly Pure One touched the leprous man without Himself becoming contaminated. In any other house, the man who touched a leper would have been defiled, but when Christ comes into contact with impurity, He is not defiledHe removes it! This is what the Gospel is meant to do to the world. We are to go and seek the good of the most fallen and abandoned of men and those who do so ought to have so much of the spirit of Jesus Christ in them, and so much vitality in their piety, that they will not be tempted by the sin upon which they look! But, on the contrary, will overcome that sin and impart spiritual health instead of receiving infection. May we be in such a state of health as Jesus was! Then shall we be able to touch the leper and not be defiled. Jesus touched Him

13. Saying, I will: be you clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.Ask Him to touch you, also, poor leprous Soulyou who are full of sin, you who are deeply conscious that the deadly disease of sin is incurably upon you! Ask Him but to touch you, for the touch of His finger shall make you clean in a moment! Christs cures are often instantaneous. He who could speak a world into being with a word, can also speak a man into perfect spiritual sanity with a word.

14, 15. And He charged him to tell no man, but go and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him. Some fires burn the more fiercely for being dampened and such was the fame of Christit was not to be kept under. The more He bade men be quiet, so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him.

15. And great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. Two words that I long to see linked together in this houseto hear, and to be healed by Him. You come to hear. Can you not also come to be healed by Him of your infirmities?

16. And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed. The tense of the verb implies that He often did this. It was His habit to withdraw Himself for private prayer even in His busiest times and when He could occupy every minute with great advantage to the people. Thus He gathered new strength from above for each days workand when there was most to be done, then He took most time to pray. It is an evil economy that tries to take time for other things that should be spent in prayer, for the shortening of prayer will be the weakening of our power.

17. And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. Not the Pharisees and doctors of the Lawthey do not often get healed by Christbut the power of the Lord was present to heal the multitude. The only people for whom there seems to be no power to heal are these Pharisees and doctors, as will appear by the following narrative.

18. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy. He had had a stroke of paralysis.   
18, 19. And they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop. By the external staircase   
19. And let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. Probably into the courtyard of the house where Jesus was preaching.   
20. And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you. Laying the axe at the rootnot healing the paralysis, at first, but forgiving the sin which depressed the mans spirit and so was, in a measure, the cause of the paralysis. By removing the sin, He raised the mans spirits and with his renewed spirits, there same back strength. Note that it was when He saw their faith that He said unto the man, Your sins are forgiven you.   
21. And the scribes and the Pharisees. Here they are, these quibbling gentlemen, these Pharisees and doctors of the Law.   
21-23. Began to reason, saying, Who it this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answering said unto them, What do you reason in your hearts? Which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Rise up and walk? He that could do the one could do the other! He who bids the paralyzed man walk is DivineHe, therefore, can forgive sin!   
24-26. But that you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, He said unto the sick of the palsy, I say unto you, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, we have seen strange things today. May we often see such strange things spiritually!   
27-32. And after these things He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said unto him, Follow Me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him. And Levi made Him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But the scribes and Pharisees murmured against His disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The murmuring of those Pharisees and doctors of the Law had one good result, for it led the Savior to declare the purpose of His mission to the earthI came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

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SPECIAL PROTRACTED PRAYER   
NO. 798

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, MARCH 1, 1868, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.

**And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. Luke 6:12.**

IF any man of woman born might have lived without prayer it was surely the Lord Jesus Christ. To us poor weak erring mortals, prayer is an absolute necessity. But it does not at first sight seem to be so to Him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. In some parts of prayer our Lord Jesus Christ could take no share. As for instance in that most important department, namely, personal confession of sin, He could take no portion. There were no slips in His outward life. There were no declensions in His inward heart. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors is a very suitable prayer for Him to teach us, but He could not use it Himself.

Nor had He any need to pray against inward corruptions, seeing He was born without them. We wrestle hard each day with original sin, but Jesus knew no such adversaries. It is as much as we can do, with all the weapons of our holy war, to keep down the foes of our own household, but our Lord had no sinful nature to subdue. The inner life is a daily struggle with some of us, so that Pauls exclamation, O wretched man that I am! is exceedingly familiar to our lips. But our Lord said truly of Himself, The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me. Moreover, our Lord had not to seek some of the things which are exceedingly needful to His disciples. One desire which I trust is ever present with us, is for growth in Divine Grace and for advancement in the Divine lifebut our Lord was always perfect in holiness and love. I see not how there could have been any advancement in purity in HimHe was always the spotless lily of innocence, incomparable, faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Our Lord had no need to make self-examination each night. When He retired for prayer there would be no need to scan the actions of the day or to detect shortcomings and flaws. There would be no necessity to investigate secret motives to see whether He might not have been actuated by sinister principles. The deep wellsprings of His being were not of earth, but altogether Divine. When He bowed His knee in the morning He had no need to pray to be protected from sin during the day. He went forth to His daily labor without the infirmities which we bear within us, and was free from the tendencies to evil which we bear about us. Tempted He was in all points as we are, but the arrows which wound us glanced harmlessly from Him.

Yet mark carefully, although our glorious Master did not require to pray in some of those respects in which it is most needful to us, yet never was there a man who was more abundant in prayer and in supplication, nor One in whom prayer was exercised with so much vehemence and importunity! He was the greatest of preachers, but His prayers made even a deeper impression on His disciples than His sermonsfor they did not say, Lord, teach us to preach, but they did exclaim, Lord, teach us to pray. They felt that He was Master of that heavenly art, and at His feet they desired to sit that they might learn how to move Heaven and earth with sacred wrestling. Brethren, since our sinless Lord was this mighty in prayer, does not His example say to us, with a voice irresistibly persuasive, Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation?

You are to be conformed to the image of Christbe conformed in this respectthat you are men of prayer. You desire to know the secret of His power with menseek to obtain His power with God. You wish to obtain the blessings which were so copiously bestowed upon Himseek them where He sought themfind them where He found them. If you would adorn His doctrine and increase His kingdom, use the weapon of allprayer which insures victory to all who use it as the Captain did! Our Lord Jesus Christ was most constant in His perpetual devotions. Devout men are used to set apart times for extraordinary supplication. Yet a man who does not pray regularly, is but a hypocrite when he pretends to pray specially.

Who would care to live in a misers house who starved you all the year round, except that now and then on a feast day he fed you daintily? We must not be miserly in prayer, neglecting it regularly and only abounding in it on particular occasions when ostentation, rather than sincerity, may influence us. But even he who keeps a bounteous table sometimes spreads a more luxurious feast than at other timesand even so must we, if we habitually live near to Godselect our extraordinary seasons in which the soul shall have her fill of fellowship. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the text before us, has set us an example of extraordinary devotion, supplying us with all the details and minutiae of the exercise.

Notice the place which He selected for it. He sought the solitude of a mountain. He was so popular that He could not hope in any city or village to be free from innumerable followers. He was so great a benefactor that He could never be without sick folk entreating healing at His hands. He knew no leisure, no, not so much as to eat bread, and therefore, to obtain a little respite He sought the hollow of some lofty hill where foot of man could not profane His loneliness. If you would draw near to God in an extraordinary manner, you must take care to be entirely undisturbed. I know not how it is, but if ever one desires to approach very near to God there is sure to be a knock at the door, or some matter of urgent business, or some untoward circumstance to tempt us from our knees.

Is it so, that Satan knows how soul-fattening retirement and devotion are, and therefore, if he can by any method stir up friend or foe to call us out of our closets he will surely do so? Here our Lord was beyond callthe mountain was better than a closet with bolted doors. Far off was the din of the city and the noise of those who clamored with their merchandise. Neither the shout of triumph nor the wail of sorrow could reach Him there. Beloved Friends, carefully seek, if you can, a perfect solitude, but if not, reach as near to it as you can and as much as possible keep out the sound and thought of the outer world.

Did not our Lord resort to the mountain in order that He might be able to pray aloud? I cannot speak for others, but I often find it very helpful to myself to be able to speak aloud in private prayer. I do not doubt but that very spiritual minds can pray for a great length of time without the motion of the lips, but I think the most of us would often find it a spur and assistance if we could give utterance to our cries and sighs, no one being present to hear. We know that our Lord was accustomed to use strong cries and tears, and these it would not have been desirable for a human ear to listen to. In fact, His natural modesty would have put Him under a restraint. He therefore sought mountains far away, that He might, in His Fathers Presence, and in the presence of no one else, pour out His entire soulgroaning, struggling, wrestling, or rejoicingas His spirit might be moved at the time.

Did He not also seek the mountain to avoid ostentation? If we pray to be seen of men we shall have our reward, and a pitiful reward it will be we shall have the admiration of shallow fools and nothing more. If our object in prayer is to obtain blessings from God we must present our prayers unspoiled by human observation. Get alone with your God if you would move His arm. If you fast, appear not unto men to fast. If you plead personally with God, tell none of it. Take care that this is a secret between God and your own soulthen shall your Father reward you openly. But if you gad about like a Pharisee and sound your trumpet in the corner of the streets, you shall go where the Pharisee has gonewhere hypocrites feel forever the wrath of God!

Jesus, therefore, to prevent interruption, to give Himself the opportunity of pouring out His whole soul, and to avoid ostentation, sought the mountain. What a grand oratory for the Son of God! What walls would have been so suitable? What room would have worthily housed so mighty an Intercessor? The Son of God most fittingly entered Gods own glorious temple of Nature when He would commune with Heaven. Those giant hills and the long shadows cast by the moonlight were alone worthy to be His companions. No pomp of gorgeous ceremony can possibly have equaled the glory of Natures midnight on the wild mountains side where the stars, like the eyes of God, looked down upon the Worshipper, and the winds seemed as though they would bear the burden of His sighs and tears upon their willing wings. Samson, in the temple of the Philistines, moving the giant pillars, is a mere dwarf compared with Jesus of Nazareth moving Heaven and earth, as He bows Himself alone in the great temple of Jehovah!

For purposes of extraordinary devotion, the time selected by our Master is also a lesson to us. He chose the silent hours of night. Now it may so happen that if we literally imitated Him we might altogether miss our way, for, no doubt, He chose the night because it was most convenient, congenial and in every way appropriate. To some of us the night might be most inappropriate and unsuitable. If so, we must by no means select it, but must follow our Lord in the spirit rather than in the letter. We should give to heavenly things, that part of the day in which we can be most quiet those hours which we can most fairly allot to it without despoiling our other duties of their proper proportion of time.

By day our Savior was preachingHe could not cease from preaching even to spend the day in prayer. By day the multitude needed healing our Lord would not suspend His benevolent work for His private communions. We are to take care never to present one duty to God stained with the blood of anotherbut to balance and proportion our different forms of service so that our life-work may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing. Usually, however, night will be the favored season for wrestling Jacobs. When every man had gone to his own home to rest, the Man of Nazareth had a right to seek His solace where best He could, and if sleep refreshed others, and prayer more fully refreshed Him, then by all means let Him pray. Against this not a dog shall move his tongue.

Set apart, for remarkably protracted intercession, seasons which answer to this description, when the time is your ownnot your masters. Your ownnot your families. Not pilfered from family devotion. Not abstracted from the public assembly or Sunday school. Set apart the time of quiet, when all around you is in reposethe time congenial to solemnity, and the awe of a spirit hushed into reverent subjection, yet uplifted to rapt devotion. Such time, with many, may be the night. With others it may be the day. Let sanctified common sense be your direction.

Again, our Lord sets us a good example in the matter of extraordinary seasons of devotion in the protracted character of His prayer. He continued all night in prayer. I do not think that we are bound to pray long as a general rule. I am afraid, however, there is no great need to make the remark, for most of Christians are short enough, if not far too short in private worship. By the aid of the Holy Spirit it is possible to throw, by holy energy and sacred zeal, as much prayer into a few minutes as into many hours, for prevalent prayer is not measured by God by the yard or by the hour. Force is its standard rather than length.

When the whole soul groans itself out in half-a-dozen sentences there may be more real devotion in them than in hours of mere wire drawing and word spinning. True prayer is the souls mounting up to God, and if it can ride upon a cherub or the wings of the wind, so much the better. But, in extraordinary seasons, when the soul is thoroughly worked up to an eminent intensity of devotion, it is well to continue it for a protracted season. We know not that our Lord was vocally praying all the time, He may have paused to contemplate. He may have surveyed the whole compass of the field over which His prayer should extend, meditating upon the Character of His God, recapitulating the precious promises, remembering the needs of His people, and thus arming Himself with arguments with which to return to wrestle and prevail.

How very few of us have ever spent a whole night in prayer, and yet what gifts we might have had for such asking! We little know what a night of prayer would do for usits effect we can scarcely calculate. One night alone in prayer might make us new menchanged from poverty of soul to spiritual wealthfrom trembling to triumph! We have an example of it in the life of Jacob. Previously the crafty shuffleralways bargaining and calculating, unlovely in almost every respectyet one night in prayer turned the supplanter into a prevailing prince and robed him with celestial grandeur! From that night he lives on the sacred page as one of the nobility of Heaven. Could not we, at least now and then, in these weary earthbound years, hedge about a single night for such enriching traffic with the skies?

What? Have we no sacred ambition? Are we deaf to the yearnings of Divine love? Yet, my Brothers and Sisters, for wealth and for science, men will cheerfully quit their warm couches! Cannot we do it now and then for the love of God and the good of souls? Where is our zeal, our gratitude, our sincerity? I am ashamed while I thus upbraid both myself and you. May we often tarry at Jabbok, and cry with Jacob, as he grasped the An

gel *With You all night I mean to stay,   
And wrestle till the break of day.*   
Surely, Brothers and Sisters, if we have given whole days to folly, we can   
afford a space for heavenly wisdom! Time was when we gave whole nights  
to chambering and wantonness, to dancing and the worlds revelrywe   
did not tire, thenwe were chiding the sun that he rose so soon, and   
wishing the hours would lag awhile that we might delight in wilder merriment, and perhaps deeper sin. Oh, why should we weary in heavenly employments? Why do we grow weary when asked to watch with our Lord?  
Up, sluggish Heart, Jesus calls you! Rise and go forth to meet the heavenly Friend in the place where He manifests Himself!   
Jesus has further instructed us in the art of special devotion by the   
manner of His prayer. Notice He continued all night in prayer to Godto  
God! How much of our prayer is not prayer to God at all! It is nominally   
so, but it is really a muttering to the wind, a talking to the airfor the  
Presence of God is not realized by the mind. He that comes to God must  
believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek   
Him. Do you know what it is, mentally, to lay hold upon the great Unseen  
One, and to talk with Him as really as you talk to a friend whose hand  
you grip? How heavenly to speak right down into Gods ear, to pour your  
heart directly into Gods heart, feeling that you live in Him as the fish live   
in the sea, and that your every thought and word are discerned by Him! It   
is true pleading when the Lord is present to you, and you realize His Presence and speak under the power and influence of His Divine overshadowing.   
That is to pray, indeed, but to continue all night in such a frame of  
mind is wonderful to me, for I must confess, and I suppose it is your confession, too, that if for awhile I get near to God in prayer, yet distracting  
thoughts will intrudethe ravenous birds will come down upon the sacrificethe noise of archers will disturb the songs at the place of drawing of   
water. How soon do we forget that we are speaking to God and go on mechanically pumping up our desires, perhaps honestly uttering them, but   
forgetting to Whom they are addressed! Oh, were He not a gracious God,   
the imperfection of our prayers would prevent so much as one of them   
ever reaching His ear!   
But He knows our frailty and takes our prayers, not as what they are,   
but as what we mean them to be! And beholding them in Jesus Christ He accepts both us and them in the Beloved. Let us learn from our Master to make our prayers distinctly and directly appeals to God. That gunner will do no service to the army who takes no aim, but is content so long as he does but fire. That vessel makes an unprofitable voyage which is not steered for a port, but is satisfied to sail here and there. We must direct our prayers to God, and maintain soul-fellowship with Him or our devotion will become a nullity, a name for a thing which is not.   
The Ethiopic translation reads, in prayer with God. Truly this is the highest order of prayer, and though the translation may be indefensible, the meaning is correct enough, for Jesus was eminently with God all night. To pray with Goddo you know what that is? To be the echo of Jehovahs voice! To desire the Lords desires and long with His longings! This is a gracious condition to be in, when the heart is a tablet for the Lord to write upon, a coal blazing with celestial fire, a leaf driven with the heavenly wind! Oh, to be absorbed in the Divine will, having ones whole mind swallowed up in the mind of God! This for a whole night would be blessedthis forever bliss itself.   
Note too, that some have translated the passage, in the prayer of God. This is probably an incorrect translation, though Dr. Gill appears to endorse it, and it brings out a precious meaning. The most eminent things were in the Hebrew language ascribed to God, so that by it would be meant the noblest prayer, the most intense prayer, the most vehement prayera prayer in which the whole man gathers up his full strength and spends it in an agony before the Eternal Throne. Oh, to pray like that! The great, deep, vehement prayer of God! Brothers and Sisters, I am afraid that as a rule in our Prayer Meetings, we are much too decorous, and even in our private prayers feel too much the power of formality. Oh, how I delight to listen to a Brother who talks to God simply and from his heart! And I must confess I have no small liking to those rare old-fashioned Methodist prayers which are now quite out of date. Our Methodist friends, for the most part, are getting too fine and respectable nowadaystoo genteel to allow of prayers such as once made the walls to ring again. O for a revival of those glorious violent prayers which flew like hot shot against the battlements of Heaven! O for more moving of the posts of the doors in vehemencemore thundering at the gates of mercy! I would sooner attend a prayer meeting where there were groans and cries all over the place, and cries and shouts of Hallelujah! than be in your polite assemblies where everything is dull as death and decorous as the whitewashed sepulcher. O for more of the prayer of Godthe whole body, soul and spirit working togetherthe whole man being aroused and stirred up to the highest pitch of intensity to wrestle with the Most High! Such, I have no doubt, was the prayer of Jesus on the cold mountains side.   
Once more, we may learn from Jesus our Lord the occasion for special devotion. At the time when our Master continued all night in prayer He had been upbraided by the Pharisees. He fulfilled the resolve of the man after Gods own heart. Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in Your precepts. So David did, and so did Davids Lord. The best answer to the slanderers of the ungodly is to be more constant in communion with God! Now, has it been so with any of you? Have you been persecuted or despised? Have you passed through any unusual form of trial? Then celebrate an unusual season of prayer! This is the alarm bell which God rings. Hasten to Him for refuge. See to it that in this, your time of trouble, you betake yourself to the Mercy Seat with greater diligence.   
Another reason is also noticed in the context. Christ had said to His disciples, Pray you, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest. What He told them to do He would be sure to do, Himself. He was just about to choose 12 Apostles, and before that solemn act of ordination was performed He sought power for them from the Most High. Who can tell what blessings were vouchsafed to the 12 in answer to that midnight intercession? If Satan fell like lightning from Heaven, Jesus prayer did it rather than the Apostles preaching. So, Christian man, if you enter upon a new enterprise, or engage in something that is weightier and more extensive than what you have done before, select a night or a day and set it apart for special communion with the Most High.   
If you are to pray, you must workbut if you are to work, you must also pray. If your prayer without your work will be hypocrisy, your work without your prayer will be presumptionso see to it that you are especially in supplication when especially in service. Balance your praying and working, and when you have reached the full tale of the one, do not diminish any of the other. To any man here who asks me, When should I give myself especially to a protracted season of prayer? I would answer those occasions will frequently occur. You should certainly do this when about to join the Church. The day of your public profession of faith should be altogether a consecrated day. I remember rising before the sun to seek my Masters Presence on the day when I was buried with Him in Baptism. It seemed to me a solemn ordinance not to be lightly undertaken, or flippantly carried outa duty which, if done at all, should be performed in the most solemn and earnest manner.

What is Baptism without fellowship with Christ? To be buried in Baptism, but not with Him, what is it? I would say to you young people who are joining the Church now, mind you do not do it thoughtlessly, but in coming forward to enlist in the army of Christ, set apart a special season for self-examination and prayer. When you arrive at any great change of life do the same. Do not enter upon marriage, or upon emigration, or upon starting in business without having sought a benediction from your Father who is in Heaven. Any of these things may involve years of pain, or years of happiness to youseek, therefore, to have the smile of God upon what you are about to do.   
Should you not also make your times of peculiar trial to be also times of special prayer? Wait upon God now that the child is dying. Wrestle with Him as David did about the child of Bathsheba. Draw near to God with fasting and prayer for a life that is specially dear to you if, perhaps, it may be preserved. And when the axe of death falls and the tree beneath which you found shelter is cut down, then again, before the grave is closed and the visitation is forgotten, draw near to God with sevenfold earnestness. And if you have been studying the Word of God, and cannot master a passage of Scriptureif some truth of Revelation staggers younow, again, is a time to set yourself like Daniel by prayer and supplication to find out what is the meaning of the Lord in the Book of His prophecy. Indeed, such occasions will often occur to you who are spiritual, and I charge you by the living God, if you would be rich in Divine Grace, if you would make great advances in the Divine lifeif you would be eminent in the service of your Masterattend to these occasions. Get an hour alone, an hour, yestwo hours a day if you canand go not away from the Masters Presence till your face is made to shine as once the face of Moses did when he had been long upon the mount alone with God.   
And now, having thus brought out the example of Christ as well as I can, I want to make an application of the subject to this Church which at this juncture has set apart a long season for special devotion. My words shall be few, but I earnestly desire that God may make them weighty to each member of this Church. A Church, in order to have a blessing upon its special times of prayer, must abound in constant prayer at other times. I do not believe in spasmodic efforts for revival. There should be special occasions, but these should be the outgrowths of ordinary, active, healthy vigor! To neglect prayer all the year round, and then to celebrate a special weekis it much better than hypocrisy? To forsake the regular Prayer Meetings, but to come in crowds to a special onewhat is this? Does it not betray superficiality or the effervescence of mere excitement? The Church ought always to pray! Prayer is to her what salt and bread are to our tables. No matter what the meal, we must have salt and bread there. And no matter what the Churchs engagements, she must have her regular constancy of prayer. I think that in London our Churches err in not having morning and evening prayer daily in every case where the Church is large enough to maintain it. I am glad that our zealous Brethren have here for some years maintained that constant prayer. I am thankful that in this Church I cannot find much fault with you for nonattendance at the Prayer Meetings. There are some of you who never come, and I suppose you are such poor things that you are not of much good whether you come or stay away. But on the whole the most of the people who fear God in this place are abundant in their attendance at the means of Divine Gracenot to be blamed in any measure whatever for forsaking the assembling of themselves togetherfor they do draw near to God most regularly. And such Prayer Meetings have we every Monday as I fear are not to be found anywhere else. But we must see to it that we keep this up, and moreover, those who are lax and lagging behind must ask forgiveness of their heavenly Father, and endeavor henceforth to be more instant in supplication. If, Brothers and Sisters, men ought always to pray and not to faint, much more should Christian men!  
Jesus has sent His Church into the world on the same errand upon which He Himself came, and that includes intercession. What if I say that the Church is the worlds priest? Creation is dumb, but the Church is to find a mouth for it. Ungodly men are dumb of heart and will, but we who have the will and the power to intercede dare not be silent. It is the Churchs privilege to pray. The door of Divine Grace is always open for her petitions and they never return empty-handed. The veil was rent for her, the blood was sprinkled upon the altar for her, God constantly invites her! Will she refuse the privilege which angels might envy her? Is not the Church the bride of Christ? May she not go in unto her King at any time, at every time? Shall she allow the precious privilege to be unused? The Church ever has need for prayer. There are always some in her midst who are declining, and frequently those who are falling into open sin. There are the lambs to be prayed for that they may be carried in Christs bosom. There are the strong to be prayed for lest they grow presumptuous, and the weak lest they become despairing. In such a Church as this is, if we kept up Prayer Meetings 24 hours in the day, 365 days in the year, we might never be without a special subject for supplication. Are we ever without the sick and the poor? Are we ever without the afflicted and the wavering? Are we ever without those who are seeking the conversion of their relatives, the reclaiming of backsliders, or the salvation of the depraved?   
No, with such congregations constantly gathering, with such a densely peopled neighborhoodwith three million sinners around us, the most part of them lying dead in trespasses and sins! With such a country beginning to be benighted in superstitionover whom the darkness of Romanism is certainly gathering! In a world full of idols, full of cruelties, full of devilriesif the Church does not pray, how shall she excuse her base neglect of the command of her loving Lord and Covenant Head? Let this Church, then, be constant in supplication! There should be frequent Prayer Meetingsthese Prayer Meetings should be constantly attended by all. Every man should make it a point of duty to come as often as possible to the place where prayer is to be made. I wish that all throughout this country the prayers of Gods Churches were more earnest and constant. It might make a man weep tears of blood to think that in our Dissenting Churches in so many cases the Prayer Meetings are so shamefully attended. I could indicate places that I know of, situated not many miles from where we now stand, where there are sometimes so few in attendance that there are scarcely praying men enough to keep up variety in the Prayer Meeting! I know towns where the Prayer Meeting is put off during the summer monthsas if the devil would take off during the summer! I know of agricultural districts where they always put off prayer during the harvest, and I make some kind of excuse for them because the fruits of the earth must be gathered inbut I cannot understand large congregations where the Prayer Meeting and lecture are amalgamated because there will not be enough persons coming out to make two decent services in the week.   
And then they say that God does not bless the Word! How can He bless the Word? They say Our conversions are not so numerous as they were, and they wonder how it is that we at the Tabernacle have so large an increase month by month! Do you wonder, Brothers and Sisters, that they have not a blessing when they do not seek it? Do you wonder that we have it when we seek it? That is but a natural law of Gods own government, that if men will not pray, neither shall they haveand if men will pray, and pray vehementlyGod will deny them nothing! He opens wide His hands and says, Ask what you will, and it shall be given to you. I wish our denomination of Baptists, and other denominations of Christians were greater believers in prayer, for this mischief of Ritualism and Rationalism which is coming upon usthis curse which is withering our nationthis blight and mildew which are devouring the vineyard of the Lord has all come upon us because public prayer has almost ceased in the land as to its constancy, vehemence, and importunity! The Lord recover us from this sin! But let the Church be as diligent in prayer as she may on regular occasions, she ought still to have her special seasons. A thing which is regular and constant is sure to tire, so a little novelty is lawful. A little specialty may often tend to revive those who, otherwise, would be given to slumber.   
The Church should have her special praying times because she has her special needs. There are times when spiritual epidemics fall upon Churches and congregations. Sometimes it is the disease of pride, luxury, worldliness. At other times there are many falling into overt sin. Sometimes a vile form of vice will break out in the very midst of the Church of God! At other times it is a heresy, or a doctrine carried to excess, or ill will, or a lack of brotherly love, or a general lethargy. At such special times of trial a Church should have her extraordinary Prayer Meetings. When she is engaging in new enterprises and is about to break up new ground she needs fresh strength, and she should seek it. Let her call her members together, and with heart and soul let them commend the work to God.   
There should be special seasons of prayer because the Holy Spirit prompts us to it. I believe in the Holy Spirit, is a sentence of the Creed, but how few really believe it? We seem to fancy that we have no motions of the Holy Spirit now among godly men as before. But I protest before the living God that such is not the case! The Holy Spirit at this day moves in those who are conversant with Him and who are content to regard His gracious monitions. And He prompts us to special fellowship. We speak what we know! We declare what we have tasted and handled! The Holy Spirit, at certain times, prompts us to come together with peculiar earnestness and special desires.

And then, if this suffices not, God has been pleased to set His seal to special seasons of prayertherefore they ought to be held. There have been more ingatherings, I was about to say, under special efforts of a month than under ordinary efforts of 11 months. I am sure that, last year, we saw very clearly Gods blessing upon us during the month of February. All the year roundmy dear Brothers, the deacons and elders can bear me out in itthere were always cases coming forward who said, We were decided for Christ during the February meetings. God has always blessed the ministry here. I say it not to boast, but to the glory to God! I do not know of any sermon preached here without conversions. But yet those times of special meetingthose solemn assemblieshave always been a hundred-fold blessed of God, so that we have good reason to say we will continue them with renewed zeal because the Lord is with them. Now, Brothers and Sisters, I must have just a word with you upon another matter, namely, that it should be our endeavor to bring power into these special meetings. They are lawful. They are necessary. Let us make them profitable. The way to do so is to draw near to God as Christ did! When He prayed it was a Son talking to His Fatherthe Son of God talking with the Father Godand unbosoming His heart in close communion. Come up tomorrow, my Brethren, as sons of God to your Father! Speak to Him as to One who is very near akin to you. There will be no lack of power if such is the case. Jesus drew near to God in His prayer as a priest, the High Priest making intercession for the people. You are all priests and kings unto God if you believe in Christ.   
Come with your breastplates on tomorrow! Come that you may intercede before the Throne of God pleading the merit of the precious blood. There will be no flagging if every man puts on his priestly miter. Jesus came before God with a burning zeal for His Fathers glory. He could say, The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up. Burn and blaze, my Brethren, with love to God! Wait upon Him this afternoonlet that be a special private season of prayerand ask Him to teach you how to love Him, show you how to reverence Him and fire you with an intense ambition to spread abroad the savor of His name! Jesus Christ drew near to God in prayer with a wondrous love to the souls of men. Those tears of His were not for Himself, but for others! Those sighs and cries were not for His own pangs, but for the sorrows and the sins of men!   
Try to feel as Christ did. Get a tender heart, an awakened conscience, quickened sympathiesand then if you come up to the House of God, the Prayer Meetings cannot be dull. Seek to be bathed in the blood of Christ! Go, my Brothers and Sisters, to the wounds of Christ and get life! Get blood for your prayers! Sit down at Golgotha and gaze upon your dying Lord, and hear Him say, I have loved you, and given Myself for you.  
Then rise up with this resolve in your soul *Now for the love I bear His name,   
What was my gain I count my loss,*   
and go forward determined in His strength that nothing shall be lacking   
on your part to win for Him a kingdom, to gain for Him the hearts of the   
sons of men! If such shall be your state of mind, I am quite sure there will   
be power with God in prayer.   
In closing, I shall say to you, we, above all the Churches of this country, have a special need and a special encouragement to make our prayers   
things of power. For, in the first place, my Brothers and Sisters, what a   
multitude we are now! I often wish, though I beg to be pardoned of the   
Lord for it, that I had never occupied the position that I now fill because of   
its solemn responsibilities. I tell you, when I feel them, they crush me to  
the ground and I can only manage to sustain my spirits by endeavoring to   
cast them upon the Lord. Why, 3,700 of you in Church fellowship, or   
thereaboutswhat can I do? Somebody complains that this sick one is   
not visited, or that that sinning one is not rebuked. How can I do it? How  
can one man, how can 20 men, how can a hundred men do the work?   
God knows I would, if I could, cut myself in pieces, that every piece might   
be active in His service. But how can we rule and minister fully in such a   
Church as this?   
God has supplied my lack of service very wonderfully. Still, there are   
things that make my heart ache day and night, as well as other matters that make my soul leap for joy. O pray for this great Church! Where our power utterly fails us, let us implore the Divine power to come in, that all may be kept right. We have need to pray, for some have fallen. We have to confess it with a blush that crimsons our cheeksome have fallen shamefully. O pray that others may not fall, and that the good men among us may be upheld by the power of God through faith unto salvation! Think, my Brethren, of the agencies which we are employing. If we do not pray for these they will be so much wasted effort!   
Every week the sermons preached here are scattered by tens of thousands all over the globenot in this language only, but in all the languages of Christendom are they read! Pray that Gods blessing may rest upon the Word which He has blessed before. Our sons, our young ministers whom this Church has trained at her feet, are now to be counted by hundredsscattered all over this country and elsewhere. Intercede for them! Forget not your own sonsturn not your hearts away from your own children whom God has sent forth to be heralds of the Cross! In your Sunday schools, in your tract distributions, in your city missions, in your street preaching, in your offering of spiritual literature, in your orphanageeverywhereseek to glorify Christ! Do not, I beseech you, forget the one thing needful in all this. Do not be foolish builders who will buy marble and precious stones at great cost, and then forget to lay the cornerstone securely. If it is worth while to serve God, it is worth while to pray that the service may be blessed! Why all this labor and cost? It is but offering to the Lord that which He cannot acceptunless by prayer you sanctify the whole.   
I think I see you as a Church standing by the side of your altar with the victims slain. The wood placed in order but there is, as yet, still lacking the fire from on high. O intercede, you Elijahsmen of like passions with us, but yet earnest men, upon whose hearts God has written prayer intercede mightily! Intercede till at last the fire shall come down from Heaven to consume the sacrifice and to make all go up like a pillar of smoke unto the Most High! I cannot speak unto you as I would. The earnestness of my heart prevents my lips uttering what I feel, but if there are any bonds of love between usabove all, if there are any bonds of love between us and Christby His precious blood, by His death-sweat, by His holy life, and by His agonizing death I do beseech you to strive together with us in your prayers that the Spirit of God may rest upon us, and to God shall be the glory. Amen and Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #3178 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE PREPARATORY PRAYERS OF CHRIST   
NO. 3178

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30TH, 1909,

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 7, 1873.

**Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.   
Luke 3:21, 22.**

**And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.   
Luke 6:12,13.**

**And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.   
Luke 9:28, 29.**

**And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.   
Matthew 14:23-25.**

**Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead were laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me.**

**John 11:41, 42.**

**And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren. Luke 22:31, 32.**

**And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. Luke 23:46.**

THERE is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a Man of much prayer. He was mighty as a Preacher, for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, Never man spoke like this Man. But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible! We do not read that His disciples ever asked Him to teach them to preach, but we are told that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray. He had no doubt been praying with such amazing fervor that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer and they, therefore, desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a Man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful Man. His words speak to us like the words of One whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of Heaven! He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

Prayer seems to be like a silver thread running through the whole of our Saviors life and we have the record of His prayers on many special occasions. It struck me that it would be both interesting and instructive for us to notice some of the seasons which Jesus spent in prayer. I have selected a few which occurred either before some great work or some great suffering, so our subject will really be the preparatory prayers of Christthe prayers of Christ as He was approaching something which would put a peculiar stress and strain upon His Manhood, either for service or for suffering. And if the consideration of this subject shall lead all of us to learn the practical lesson of praying at all timesand yet to have special seasons for prayer just before any peculiar trial or unusual servicewe shall not have met in vain!

I. The first prayer we are to consider is OUR LORDS PRAYER IN PREPARATION FOR HIS BAPTISM. It is in Luke 3:21, 22Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying, (it seems to have been a continuous act in which He had been previously occupied), the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.

The Baptism of our Lord was the commencement of His manifestation to the sons of men. He was now about to take upon Himself in full all the works of His Messiahship and, consequently, we find Him very specially engaged in prayer. And, Beloved, it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate that when any of us have been converted and are about to make a Scriptural profession of our faithabout to take up the soldiers life under the great Captain of our salvationabout to start out as pilgrims to Zions cityI say that it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate for us to spend much time in very special prayer! I would be very sorry to think that anyone would venture to come to be baptized, or to be united with a Christian Church without having made that action a matter of much solemn consideration and earnest prayer. But when the decisive step is about to be taken, our whole being should be very specially concentrated upon our supplication at the Throne of Grace.

Of course we do not believe in any sacramental efficacy attaching to the observance of the ordinance, but we receive a special blessing in the act, itself, because we are moved to pray even more than usual before it takes place and at the time. At all events, I know that it was so in my own case. It was many years ago, but the remembrance of it is very vivid at this moment and it seems to me as though it only happened yesterday! It was in the month of May and I rose very early in the morning so that I might have a long time in private prayer. Then I had to walk about eight miles, from Newmarket to Isleham, where I was to be baptized in the river. I think that the blessing I received that day resulted largely from that season of solitary supplication and my meditation, as I walked along the country roads and lanes, upon my indebtedness to my Savior and my desire to live to His praise and Glory. Dear young people, take care that you start right in your Christian life by being much in prayer! A profession of faith that does not begin with prayer will end in disgrace. If you come to join the Church, but do not pray to God to uphold you in consistency of life, and to make your profession sincere, the probability is that you are already a hypocrite! Or if that is too uncharitable a suggestion, the probability is that if you are converted, the work has been of a very superficial character and not of that deep and earnest kind of which prayer would be the certain index. So again I say to you that if any of you are thinking of making a profession of your faith in Christ, be sure, then, in preparation for it, you devote a special season to drawing near to God in prayer.

As I read the first text, no doubt you noticed that it was while Christ was praying that, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased. There are three occasions of which we read in Scripture when God bore audible testimony to Christ. And on each of these three occasions He was either in the act of prayer or He had been praying but a very short time before. Christs prayer is especially mentioned in each instance side by side with the witness of His Fatherand if you, beloved Friends, want to have the witness of God either at your Baptism or on any subsequent act of your lifeyou must obtain it by prayer! The Holy Spirit never sets His seal to a prayerless religion! It has not in it that of which He can approve. It must be truly said of a man, Behold, he prays, before the Lord bears such testimony concerning him as He bore concerning Saul of Tarsus, He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles.

So we find that it was while Christ was praying at His Baptism that the Holy Spirit came upon Him, in a bodily shape like a dove, to qualify Him for His public service! And it is through prayer that we, also, receive that spiritual enrichment that equips us as co-workers together with God. Without prayer you will remain in a region that is desolate as a desert! But bend your knees in supplication to the Most High and you have reached the land of promise, the country of benediction! Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you, not merely as to His gracious Presence, but as to the powerful and efficacious working of the Holy Spirit! More prayermore power! The more pleading with God that there is, the more power will there be in pleading with men, for the Holy Spirit will come upon us while we are pleading and so we shall be fitted and qualified to do the work to which we are called of God!

Let us learn, then, from this first instance of our Saviors preparatory prayer at His Baptism, the necessity of special supplication on our part in similar circumstances. If we are making our first public profession of faith in Him, or if we are renewing that profession. If we are moving to another sphere of service, if we are taking office in the Church as deacons or elders, if we are commencing the work of the pastorate. If we are in any way coming out more distinctly before the world as the servants of Christ, let us set apart special seasons for prayerand so seek a double portion of the Holy Spirits blessing to rest upon us!

II. The second instance of the preparatory prayers of Christ which we are to consider is OUR LORDS PRAYER PREPARATORY TO CHOOSING HIS TWELVE APOSTLES. It is recorded in Luke 6:12, 13And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [See Sermon #798, Volume 14SPECIAL PRO

TRACTED PRAYERRead/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at   
http://www.spurgeongems.org.] And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.

Our Lord was about to extend His ministry. His one tongue, His one voice might have delivered His personal message throughout Palestine, but He was desirous of having far more done than He could individually accomplish in the brief period of His public ministry upon earth. He would therefore have 12 Apostles and afterwards 70 disciples who would go forth in His name and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. He was infinitely wiser than the wisest of mere men, so why did He not at once select His 12 Apostles? The men had been with Him from the beginning and He knew their characters and their fitness for the work He was about to entrust to them, so He might have said to Himself, I will have James, John, Peter and the rest of the twelve, and send them forth to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and to exercise the miraculous powers with which I will endow them. He might have done this if He had not been the Christ of Godbut being the Anointed of the Father, He would not take such an important step as that without long continued prayer. So He went alone to His Father, told Him all that He desired to do and pleaded with Him, not in the brief fashion that we call prayer which usually lasts only a few minutesbut His pleading lasted through an entire night!

What our Lord asked for, or how He prayed, we cannot tell, for it is not revealed to us. But I think we shall not be guilty of vain or unwarranted curiosity if we use our imagination for a minute or two. In doing so, with the utmost reverence, I think I hear Christ crying to His Father whom the right men might be selected as the leaders of the Church of God upon the earth. I think I also hear Him pleading that upon these chosen men a Divine influence might rest, that they might be kept in character, honest in heart and holy in lifeand that they might also be preserved in sound Doctrine and not turn aside to error and falsehood. Then I think I hear Him praying that success might attend their preaching. That they might be guided where to go, where the blessing of God would go with them and that they might find many hearts willing to receive their testimony. And that when their personal ministry should end, they might pass on their commission to others so that as long as there should be a harvest to be reaped for the Lord, there should be laborers to reap itas long as there should be lost sinners in the world, there would also be earnest, consecrated men and women seeking to pluck the brands from the burning. I will not attempt to describe the mighty wrestling of that night of prayer when, in strong cries and tears, Christ poured out His very soul into His Fathers ear and heart! But it is clear that He would not dispatch a solitary messenger with the glad tidings of the Gospel unless He was assured that His Fathers authority and the Spirits power would accompany the servants whom He was about to send forth.

What a lesson there is in all this to us! What Infallible Guidance there is here as to how a missionary society should be conducted! Where there is one committee meeting for business, there ought to be 50 for prayer! Whenever we get a missionary society whose main business it is to pray, we shall have a society whose distinguishing characteristic will be that it is the means of saving a multitude of souls! And to you, my dear young Brothers in the College, I feel moved to say that I believe we shall have a far larger blessing than we have already had when the spirit of prayer in the College is greater than it now is, though I rejoice to know that it is very deep and fervent even now! You, Brothers, have never been lacking in prayerfulness. I thank God that I have never had occasion to complain or to grieve on that account, but still, who knows what blessing might follow a night of prayer at the beginning or at any part of the sessionor an all-night wrestling in prayer in the privacy of your own bedrooms? Then, when you go out to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath, you will find that the best preparation for preaching is much praying! I have always found that the meaning of a text can be better learned by prayer than in any other way. Of course we must consult lexicons and commentaries to see the literal meaning of the words and their relation to one anotherbut when we have done all that, we shall still find that our greatest help will come from prayer! Oh, that every Christian enterprise were commenced with prayer, continued with prayer and crowned with prayer! Then might we, also, expect to see it crowned with Gods blessing!

So once again I remind you that our Saviors example teaches us that for seasons of special service, we need not only prayers of a brief character, excellent as they are for ordinary occasions, but special protracted wrestling with God like that of Jacob at the Brook Jabbok, so that each one of us can say to the Lord, with holy determination

*With You all night I mean to stay,*

*And wrestle till the break of day.*   
When such sacred persistence in prayer as this becomes common throughout the whole Church of Christ, Satans long usurpation will be coming to an end and we shall be able to say to our Lord, as the 70 disciples did when they returned to Him with joy, Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name!

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider OUR LORDS PRAYER PREPARATORY TO HIS TRANSFIGURATION. You will find it in Luke 9:28, 29And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. You see that it was as He prayed that He was transfigured.

Now, Beloved, do you really desire to reach the highest possible attainments of the Christian life? Do you, in your inmost soul, pine and pant after the choicest joys that can be known by human beings this side of Heaven? Do you aspire to rise to full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to be transformed into His image from glory to glory? If so, the way is open to you! It is the way of prayeronly there will you find these priceless blessings! If you fail in prayer, you will assuredly never come to Tabors top! There is no hope, dear Friends, of our ever attaining to anything like a transfiguration and being covered with the Light of God so that whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, unless we are much in prayer!

I believe that we make more real advance in the Divine Life in an hour of prayer than we do in a month of hearing sermons. I do not mean that we are to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but I am sure that without the praying, the hearing is of little worth! We must pray. We must plead with God if we are to really grow spiritually. In prayer, very much of our spiritual digestion is done. When we are hearing the Word, we are very much like the cattle when they are cropping the grassbut when we follow our hearing with meditation and prayer, we do, as it were, lie down in the green pasturesand get the rich nutriment for our souls out of the Truth of God. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, would you shake off the earthliness that still clings to you? Would you get rid of your doubts and your fears? Would you overcome your worldliness? Would you master all your besetting sins? Would you glow and glisten in the brightness and Glory of the holiness of God? Then be much in prayer, as Jesus was! I am sure that it must be so and that, apart from prayer, you will make no advance in the Divine Lifebut that in waiting upon God, you shall renew your spiritual strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, you shall run and not be wearyyou shall walk and not faint!

IV. I must hasten on lest time should fail us before I have finished. And I must put together two of OUR LORDS PRAYERS PREPARATORY TO GREAT MIRACLES.

The first, which preceded His stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesaret, is recorded in Matthew 14:23-25And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. He had been pleading with His Father for His disciples and then, when their ship was tossed by the waves, and driven back by the contrary winds, He came down to them from the lofty place where He had been praying for them, making a pathway for Himself across the turbulent waters that He was about to calm. Before He walked upon those tossing billows, He had prayed to His Father. Before He stilled the storm, He had prevailed with God in prayer.

Am I to do any great work for God? Then I must first be mighty upon my knees! Is there a man here who is to be the means of covering the sky with clouds and bringing the rain of Gods blessing on the dry and barren Church which so sorely needs reviving and refreshing? Then he must be prepared for that great work as Elijah was when, on the top of Carmel, He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees, and prayed as only he could pray! We shall never see a little cloud like a mans hand, which shall afterwards cover all the sky with blackness, unless first of all we know how to cry mightily unto the Most High! But when we have done that, then shall we see what we desire. Moses would never have been able to control the children of Israel as he did if he had not first been in communion with his God in the desert, and afterwards in the mountain. So if we are to be men of power, we also must be men of prayer!

The other instance to which I want to refer, showing how our Lord prayed before working a mighty miracle, is when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. You will find the account of it in John 11:41, 42Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me. He did not cry, Lazarus, come forth, so that the people heard it, and Lazarus heard it, until first He had prayed, My Father, grant that Lazarus may rise from the dead, and had received the assurance that he would do so as soon as he was called by Christ to come forth from the grave.

But, Brothers and Sisters, do you not see that if Christ, who was so strong, needed to pray thus, what need there is for us, who are so weak, to also pray? If He, who was God as well as Man, prayed to His Father before He worked a miracle, how necessary it is for us, who are merely men, to go to the Throne of Grace and plead there with importunate fervency if we are ever to do anything for God! I fear that many of us have been feeble out here in public because we have been feeble out there on the lone mountainside where we ought to have been in fellowship with God. The way to be fitted to work what men will call wonders, is to go to the God of Wonders and implore Him to gird us with His all-sufficient strength so that we may do exploits to His praise and Glory!

V. The next prayer we are to consider is OUR LORDS PRAYER PREPARATORY TO PETERS FALL. We have the record of that in Luke 22:31, 32And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your breth

ren. [See Sermons #2620, Volume 45CHRISTS PRAYER FOR PETER; #2034, Volume 34 PETERS RESTORATION and #2035, Volume 34PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATIONRead/download all the sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

There is much that is admirable and instructive in this utterance of our Lord. Satan had not then tempted Peter, yet Christ had already pleaded for the Apostle whose peril He clearly foresaw! Some of us would have thought that we were very prompt if we had prayed for a Brother or Sister who had been tempted and who had yielded to the temptation. But our Lord prayed for Peter before he was tempted. As soon as Satan had desired to have him in his sieve, that he might sift him as wheat, our Savior knew the thought that was formed in the diabolic mindand He at once pleaded for His imperiled servant who did not even know the danger that was threatening him! Christ is always beforehand with us. Before the storm comes, He has provided the harbor of refuge. Before the disease attacks us, He has the remedy ready to cure it. His mercy outruns our misery!

What a lesson we ought to learn from this action of Christ! Whenever we see any friend in peril through temptation, let us not begin to talk about him, but let us at once pray for him! Some persons are very fond of hinting and insinuating about what is going to happen to certain people with whom they are acquainted. I pray you, beloved Friends, not to do it! Do not hint that So-and-So is likely to fall, but pray that he may

not fall. Do not insinuate anything about him to others, but tell the Lord what your anxiety is concerning him.

But So-and-So has made a lot of money and he is getting very purseproud. Well, even if it is so, do not talk about him to others, but pray God to grant that he may not be allowed to become purse-proud. Do not say that he will be, but pray constantly that he may not beand do not let anyone but the Lord know that you are praying for him.

Then there is So-and-So. He is so elated with the success he has had that one can scarcely get to speak to him. Well then, Brother, pray that he may not be elated. Do not say that you are afraid he is growing proud, for that would imply what you would be if you were in his place! Your fear reveals a secret concerning your own nature, for what you judge that he would be is exactly what you would do in similar circumstances! We always measure other peoples corn with our own bushelwe do not borrow their bushel. And we can judge ourselves by our judgment of others. Let us cease these censures and judgmentsand let us pray for our Brothers and Sisters. If you fear that a minister is somewhat turning aside from the faith, or if you think that his ministry is not so profitable as it used to be, or if you see any other imperfection in him, do not go and talk about it to people in the street, for they cannot set him rightgo and tell his Master about him! Pray for him and ask the Lord to make right whatever is wrong. There is a sermon by old Matthew Wilks about our being Epistles of Christ, written not with ink, and not on tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart. And he said that ministers are the pens with which God writes on their hearts heartsand that pens need sharpening every now and thenbut even when they are sharp, they cannot write without ink! So he said that the best service that the people could render to the preacher was to pray the Lord to give them new pens and dip them in the fresh ink that they might write better than before! Do so, dear Friendsdo not blot the page with your censures and unkind remarks, but help the preacher by pleading for him even as Christ prayed for Peter!

VI. Now I must close with our LORDS PREPARATORY PRAYER JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. You will find it in Luke 23:46And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. [See Sermons #2311,

Volume 39OUR LORDS LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSSRead/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Our Lord Jesus was very specially occupied in prayer as the end of His earthly life drew near. He was about to die as His peoples Surety and Substitute. The wrath of God, which was due to them, fell upon Him! Knowing all that was to befall Him, He set His face steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem and, in due time, He endured the Cross, despising the shame. But He did not go to Gethsemane and Golgotha without prayer! Son of God as He was, He would not undergo that terrible ordeal without much supplication. You know how much there is about His praying in the later chapters of Johns Gospel. There is especially that great prayer of His for His Church in which He pleaded with amazing fervor for those whom His Father had given Him. Then there was His agonized pleading in Gethsemane when His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. We will not say much about that, but we can well imagine that the bloody sweat was the outward and visible expression of the intense agony of His soul which was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.

All that Christ did and suffered was full of prayer, so it was but fitting that His last utterance on earth should be the prayerful surrender of His spirit into the hands of His Father. He had already pleaded for His murderers, Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do. He had promised to grant the request of the penitent thief, Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom. Now nothing remained for Him to do but to say, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. His life, which had been a life of prayer, was thus closed with prayeran example well worthy of His peoples imitation!

Perhaps I am addressing someone who is conscious that a serious illness is threatening. Well then, dear Friend, prepare for it by prayer! Are you dreading a painful operation? Nothing will help you to bear it so well as pleading with God concerning it! Prayer will help you mentally as well as physicallyyou will face the ordeal with far less fear if you have laid your care before the Lord and committed yourselfbody, soul and spiritinto His hands. If you are expecting, before long, to reach the end of your mortal life either because of your advanced age, or your weak constitution, or the inroads of the deadly consumptionpray much. You need not fear to be baptized in Jordans swelling flood if you are constantly being baptized in prayer! Think of your Savior in the Garden and on the Crossand pray even as He didNot my will, but yours be done...Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.

While I have been speaking to Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, there may have been some here who are still unconvertedwho have imagined that prayer is the way to Heavenyet it is not! Prayer is a great and precious help on the road, but Christ, alone, is the Way! And the very first step heavenward is to trust ourselves wholly to Him. Faith in Christ is the all-important matter and if you truly believe in Him, you are saved! But the very first thing that a saved man does is to prayand the very last thing that he does before he gets to Heaven is to pray. Well did Montgomery write

**Prayer is the contrite sinners voice, Returning from his ways   
While angels in their songs rejoice, And cry, Behold, he prays!   
Prayer is the Christians vital breath, The Christians native air!   
His watchword at the gates of death He enters Heaven with prayer!**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: LUKE 18:1-14.**   
Verse 1. And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought   
always to pray, and not to faint. [See Sermon #2519, Volume 43WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] An

old writer says that many of Christs parables need a key to unlock them. Here, the key hangs outside the door, for at the very beginning of the parable we are told what Christ meant to teach by itthat men ought always to pray, and not to faint. And this is the parable.

2. Saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man. It is a great pity for any city and for any country where the judges do not fear Godwhere they feel that they have been put into a high office in which they may do just as they please. There were such judges in the olden times even in this landGod grant that we may not see any more like them!

3. And there was a widow in that city and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. She had no friend to plead for her. She had nobody to help her and, therefore, when she was robbed of her little patrimony, she went to the court and asked the judge for justice.

4. And he would not for a while. He preferred to be unjust. As he could do as he liked, he liked to do as he should not.   
4, 5. But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. She seems to have gone to him so often that he grew quite fatigued and pained by her persistence! The Greek words are very expressive, as though she had beaten him in the eyes and so bruised him that he could not endure it any longer. Of course, the poor woman had not done anything of the kindbut the judge thus describes her continual importunity as a wounding of him, as an attacking of him, an assault upon himfor he had, perhaps, a little conscience left. He had, at least, enough honesty to confess that he did not fear God, nor regard man. There are some of whom that is true, who will not admit it, but this judge admitted itand though he was but little troubled about ithe said, that I may not be worried to death by this womans continual coming, I will grant her request and avenge her of her adversary.   
6, 7. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him, though He

bears long with them? [See Sermon #2836, Volume 6PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He is no

unjust judge! He is One who is perfectly holy, just, true and who appears in a nearer and dearer Character than that of judge, even as the One who chose His people from eternity! Shall not God avenge His own elect? Yes, that He willonly let them persevere in prayer and cry day and night unto Him.

8. I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth? [See Sermon #1963, Volume  
33THE SEARCH FOR FAITHRead/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] If anybody can find it, He can, for He is the Creator of it! Yet, when He comes, there will be so little of it in proportion to what He deserves, and so little in proportion to the loving kindness of the Lord, that it will seem as if even He could not find italthough if there were only as much faith as a grain of mustard seed He would be the first to spy it out!

9. And He spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. It seems as if these two things went togetheras our esteem of ourselves goes up, our esteem of others goes downthe scales seem to work that way.

10. Two men went up into the Temple to pray. [See Sermon #2395, Volume 41  
THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIPRead/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It was the place that was specially dedicated for prayer. It was the place where God had promised to meet with suppliants. They did well, in those days, to go up into the Temple to pray to God. Though, in these days

*Wherever we seek Him, He is found,*

*And every place is hallowed ground.*   
It is sheer superstition which imagines that one place is better for prayer than another! So long as we can be quiet and still, let us pray wherever we may be.

10, 11. The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men areextortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. It is possible that this was all true. We have no indication that he was a hypocriteand if what he said was truethere was something in it for which he might well thank God. It was a great mercy not to be an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adultererbut what spoilt his expression of thankfulness was that back-handed blow at the other man who was praying in the same Templeor even as this publican. What had the Pharisee to do with him? He had quite enough to occupy his thoughts if he could only see himself as he really was in Gods sight!

12. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. Observe that there is no prayer in all that the Pharisee said. There was a great deal of self-righteousness and self-congratulation, but nothing else. There was certainly no prayer at all in it!

13. And the publican, standing afar offJust on the edge of the crowd, keeping as far away as he could from the Most Holy Place  
13. Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. [See Sermon #1949, Volume

33A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTHRead/download the entire sermon, free of

charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That was all prayerit was a prayer for mercy, it was a prayer in which the suppliant took his right place, for he was, as he said, a sinner. He does not describe himself as a penitent sinner, or as a praying sinner, but simply as a sinner. And as a sinner, he goes to God asking for mercy. Our English version does not give the full meaning of the publicans prayer, it is, God be propitious to me, that is, be gracious to me through the ordained Sacrifice. And that is one of the points of the prayer that made it so acceptable to God. There is a mention of the Atonement in it. There is a pleading of the sacrificial blood. It was a real prayer and an acceptable prayerwhile the Pharisees boasting was not a prayer at all.

14. I tell you, this manThis publican, sinner as he had been, though he had no broad phylacteries like the Pharisee had, though he may not have washed his hands before he came into the Temple, as, no doubt the Pharisee didthis man, who could not congratulate himself upon his own excellence, this man

14. Went down to his house justified rather than the other. He obtained both justification and the peace of mind that comes from it! God smiled upon him and set him at ease concerning his sin. The other man received no justificationhe had not sought it and he did not get it. He had a kind of spurious ease of mind when he went into the Temple and he probably carried it away with him! But he certainly was not justified in

the sight of God. [See Sermon #2687, Volume 46TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

14. For everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. God turns things upside down! If we think much of ourselves, He makes us little, and if we make little of ourselves, we shall find that a humble and contrite heart He will not despise! May He teach us so to pray that we may go down to our house justified, as the publican was!

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ZEALOTS

NO. 639

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 16, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Simon called the Zealot.   
Luke 6:15.**

SIMON called the Zealot has apparently two surnames in Scripture but they mean the same thing. He is called Simon the Canaanite in Hebrew not because he was an inhabitant of Cana or a Canaanite, but that word, when interpreted, means precisely the same as the Greek word, Zelotes. He was called Simon the Zealot. I suppose that he had this name before his conversion. It is thought by some that he was a member of that very fierce and fanatical political sect of the Jews called the Zealots, by whose means the siege of Jerusalem was rendered so much more bloody than it would have been.

But this does not seem very probable, for the sect of the Zealots had scarcely arisen in the time of the Savior. And therefore we are inclined to think with Hackett in his exposition of the Acts, that he was so called because of his zealous attachment to his religion as a Jew. There were some in the different classes of Jewish society who were so excessively full of zeal as to gain the name of zealot. But it strikes me that he must have been a zealot after conversion, too, for within that sacred circle which surrounded our Lord, every word was truth and the Master would not have allowed any of His disciples to have worn a surname which was not expressive or truthful.

He was Simon the Zealot while in the darkness and blindness of his mind he knew not the Messiah. He surely could not have been less Simon the Zealot when, gifted with the Holy Spirit, he went forth to cast out devils, heal the sick and to proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand. I should be glad if many among us would earn the same title by so living that men would call us zealots, or even fanatics, for this is so sleepy an age concerning religious things, that to be called fanatic, nowadays, is one of the highest honors a man can have conferred upon him! May we so act and live that we might truthfully wear the title of Christian zealots.

We shall occupy your time, this morning first of all by some like description of the unconverted zealot and then, secondly, by some few remarks upon the Christian zealot.

I. LET US PORTRAY THE UNCONVERTED ZEALOT. Zeal frequently expends itself on other things than religion. You will find many zealots not religious in any sense of the word. We have seen lately a few political zealots. The one important matter of their lives is the defense of the Whig or the Tory interest. It appears as if they would sacrifice their business, no, in their furor they think everything a trifle so long as they can but vindicate some favorite opinion. Such was Saul, the king of Israel. He was such a zealot for Israel and for Judah that in his zeal he slew the Gibeonites.

He was politically a zealot. He thought that the Gibeonites, being in the land, ate the bread which belonged to the sons of Israel and occupied the cities which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. Therefore, violating all covenants and solemn oathsand bringing upon the nation a great judgmenthe slew the Gibeonites. Many are scientific zealots. They will sacrifice health in sitting over mixtures of deleterious drugs to examine chemical combinations. Or they will pass through feverish countries among savage men to discover the source of a river, or measure the height of a mountain.

We can readily find business zealotstheir shop windows scarcely need shutters, for business is never over. Sunday itself is not enclosed for worship. They steal that day for keeping their books. They make haste to be rich and they are not innocent. They plunge into this speculation and the other. They often bring their bodies to sickness and their minds to madness in their zeal for riches. You do not find that the world cries out against zeal in business and in science and in politics!

No, men can admire it there, but the moment you bring it into the court of the Lords House, then straightway they hold up their hands with astonishment, or open their mouths with blasphemy! Men cannot endure that we should make eternal things real and spend our strength for them. They would have us reserve our energies for the matters in which they take so deep an interest. Brethren, we would not condemn the use of zeal in the common affairs of life, for zeal is essential to success. We only wish that Christians would copy worldly men and be half as earnest and half as ambitions to maintain and increase the kingdom of their Lord and Master as some men are after petty trifles or selfish aggrandizements.

Understand, then, that a man may be a zealot and yet there may not be a trace of religion in him for his zeal may run in quite a different channel. The unconverted zealot, should his zeal expend itself upon religion, is generally exceedingly boastful. Look at Jehu, as he bids Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, ride with him in his chariot vain-gloriously exclaiming, Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord. He cannot kill the worshippers of Baal without someone standing by to admire how he devotes himself entirely to Jehovah. Unconverted men, when full of zeal, are almost all Jehus. They must have some admiring eyes. The clap of approbation is essential to the life and vigor of their earnestness.

Not so the true Christian! He is as zealous for his Master when he stands alone or in the midst of derision as in the time when religion is honorable. Let us take care to ever avoid all boastfulness! Let us serve our Master as Jehu did and better than he, but let us never say, Come, see my zeal for the Lord.

As you travel over the mountains and become thirsty you look for the cooling stream. But the traveler who has often passed the hills never stoops to drink of the little streamlets which run uncovered down the mountain sidehe knows that their exposure to the heat of the sun has warmed the water and taken away its grateful freshness and coolness! He looks for the trickling rill which gushes fresh from the rock or bubbles up as a spring, or has found its way under the moss and great stones all hidden from the light. He loves to satisfy himself there!

It is thus with our gifts and graces. If we expose them to public view they lose their acceptability with the Most High God. But if we keep ourselves as much as possible from all ostentation and seek to serve God humbly and quietly, Jehovah Himself finds delight in the gracious works of His own beloved people. May the Lord keep us, then, from being boastful zealots! The unconverted zealot is generally an ignorant zealot. I bear them witness, says Paul, that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

The Pharisees were very fanatical. They were ignorant of Gods righteousness and they went about to establish their own. They had not learned the feebleness of the principle of the Law, and therefore they struggled on and on to attain eternal life by it. They did not know the force and strength of the great principle of Divine Grace working through faith and therefore they neglected itand with all their struggling they came short of the kingdom of Heaven. Let us beware of an ignorant zeal. How much there is of it nowadays. Probably there is more zeal to be found among the professors of false doctrine than among the followers of the Truth!

How they will garnish their churches as of old the Pharisees garnished their sepulchers! How diligently will they bedeck their altars and load them with ornaments and millinery! To what an extent of effort do they go! What asceticism will they practice! What infamy, what abuse are they not willing to endure in defending the cause of their idols and bringing back again the old superstitions of Rome! If those who are orthodox had as much zeal as the Papist and the Puseyite, it would be well for England. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, shun an ignorant zeal! And at the same time labor to blend zeal with your knowledge lest your knowledge, lacking force, should cease to be operative in the land!

Let it be forever remembered that if we are ever so zealous in a wrong faith, that zeal does not make the false true nor make us right in its prosecution. I may drink poison, devoutly believing it will do me good, but it will poison me, no matter what I believe! And so I may believe a lie ever so earnestly, but it will be a lie nevertheless and the poison of the lie will work my souls ruin just as surely as if I had not been so fervent in its belief.

Do not believe in the idea that every man who is sincere in his religion will be right at last. Not so. If a man is sincere and travels due North he will not reach a town in the Southand if he spurs his horse ever so much towards the East, he will not arrive at his destination, if that destination is a city in the West. Seek to be right. Get an understanding of the Truth as God has revealed itotherwise all your zeal will be but wildfire which will do mischief rather than good. The zeal of unconverted men is generally partial. It may be a zeal for something good, but not for everything that is good.

How zealous the Pharisee was for frequent ablutionshe would not eat bread, if ever so hungrytill he had washed his hands. How excessively zealous he was to tithe the mintit did not come to three farthings in a yearand the anise and the cumminall these little matters must be attended to! I think I see the man looking earnestly while he strains at the gnat! How he shudders lest by any means that horrid and monstrous insect should get into his wine! If it should possibly go down his throat, what pollution he would incur!

But mark the hypocrite as he turns his head the other way and he swallows a camel in the twinkling of an eye! While he can pay his mint and his anise and his cummin in full tithe, he can at the same time devour a widows house and cry out against the Lord of Life and Glory and plot and plan against the Savior till he has dragged Him to the Cross! This is the unconverted zealot! Zealous he is for sect and party when the whole that the sect may hold is not of more value than the gnat and yet great fundamental doctrinal Truths of God are forgotten, as though they were of no value whatever. Brethren, may we be earnest men of God, but I pray that we may be zealous for all the Truth of God!

We must count no Truth of God to be despicable, but take the whole Word of God as far as the Spirit of God shall reveal it unto us and stand up for it in its entirety and completenessand not be willing that the very least of Christs Commandments should be neglected or despised. The zealot, again, while unconverted, is generally, (if it is in his power), a persecutor. Concerning zeal, persecuting the Church. Paul verily thought that he was doing God a service when he drove men and women to prison and to death. And I doubt not there are many in this age most sincere zealots, who, if they would not quite delight in the sweet sacrifices of Smithfield, would, at any rate, like to pass a few repressive laws to put down those wicked Dissenters and ordain one or two salutary penalties by which those quarrelsome Baptists might have their tongues clipped a little shorterthat they might not speak out quite so plainly concerning the infamies of the State Church!

Doubtless there is a tendency with us all to wish to impose our own opinions upon others by all available means. The exaggeration of anxiety for our fellow men would lead us to adopt wrong means to make them of a right opinion! We forget that mens consciences and judgments are never touched by such rude or vulgar means as threats or penalties. We should always feel that consciences and hearts are under the jurisdiction of the Most High and in no sense whatever are they to be brought under the jurisdiction of Pope or potentate, or of any of us, no matter how orthodox we may conceive ourselves to be. Strive earnestly for your faith, but strive lawfully. Contend zealously for the Truth, but let the only fire you use be love and the only sword the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

But zealots without Grace are generally persecutors. Without Divine Grace zealots are very bitter towards their professed Brethren. We read in the Epistle of the Apostle James of some who were full of strife and envy and were yet members of the Church. From such zeal may the Lord of Hosts deliver us! Our Brethren in the fellowship with us are not to be convinced of their errors by being knocked on the head, but by having the candle held to their eyes. If we can teach them the Truth as it is in Jesus, it shall be well. But as for carnal contention and persecutionlet it be far from us.

This picture of the zealot without Christ is not complete unless we remark that often his aims are sinister. We read of some in the Epistle to the Corinthians who did zealously affect the Corinthians, but not well, for they slandered the Apostle Paul. They denied his Apostleship. They said that his bodily presence was weak and his speech was contemptible. And yet they appeared very zealous, indeedfar more zealous than Paul because they wanted to alienate the mind of the Corinthian Church from the Apostle and get themselves to be made masters in Gods heritage. Let us beware of a zeal for lifting up ourselves.

Brethren, if we preach Christ with a view to get ourselves honored by it we prostitute the sacred things of God and are guilty of that very sin which was accursed in Belshazzar, when he took the golden cups of the sanctuary to drink in them to his own delight. Zeal must be pure. It may be fire, but it must be fire from off the altar or else if we minister with any other fire, like Nadab and Abihu, we may be slain before the Lord. O that we would search our heart so as to be quite sure that we have no aim in all the world but ChristGod forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You may shoot well, you brave archers, but if you aim at the wrong target you will not win the prize. If you aim at anything but your Lords honor you shall never hear it said, Well done, good and faithful servant. To close this very sorry account of the unconverted zealothe is generally but temporary in his zeal. If the zeal is good, it dies out before long. The Apostle Paul says, It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing. Some of you are mightily zealous at a Prayer Meeting and grow intensely warm-hearted after a season of revivalyou are consecrated to God most marvelously for a month or two! You live consistently for a few weeksyou are diligent in the use of the means of Grace for a short time.

And thenwell, you have had enough of it, I suppose, and you think enough to be as good as a feast and so you would have done with heavenly thingsthe wind blows from another quarter and therefore, like the weathercock, you are turned by it in another way. Some of you would go to Heaven, but you get plucked by the sleeve Hell-wards and cannot bear a hard pulland so you turn away from Christ. One would think when you are sick that you were ripe for Heaven, but when you get well, ah, how different! When he was sick, says an old legend, the devil a monk would be, but when he got well you know how he gave up his fine intentions.

There are many now of the same sort. For a time they threaten to take the kingdom by storm! They censoriously rebuke the coldness of others. They vow to conquer Hell and enter Heaven, pushing the world before them and dragging the Church after them! But in a short time where are they? They have relapsed into their former lethargy, or perhaps they have taken their zeal with them into the camp of the adversary. Such is the unconverted zealot.

Suffer two or three more words before we leave him. There is much about him to imitate. Unconverted as he is, mischievous as his zeal may beif we could pluck that sword out of his handof how great a use might it be to us! If sinners are zealous in their sins, should not saints be zealous for their God? If the things of time can stir the human passions, should not the realities of eternity have a greater and more tremendously moving force? If these men will spend and be spent, and stretch every nerve and run the race merely for the crown of politics or of ambition, where are we? What idlers, what laggards we are that we pursue the things of God with but half a heart!

*Dear Lord and shall we always live   
At this poor dying rate?*

Bear this other word, also, namely that we ought to look upon these zealots with hopefulness. When a man serves Baal thoroughly, it is a great pity and a thing to be deplored. But I think he is a man worth catching and to be sought after. We know a sort of people who will never make much at anything. They are not very forward in sin. The devil himself cannot respect them much, they are such poor servants to him. If they ever become Christians, into the rear rank they must go. They need to be pressed forward and receive from the strength of the Church, for they can never impart power to it.

But when you get a man who is vigorous in the cause of Satan and when Sovereign Grace brings him downwhat a trophy he becomes of its power and how gloriously he contends for the Gospel of Christ! Look at Saul of Tarsus! No man more zealous against the Gospel than he, and he is second to none when he becomes a preacher of the Word! Look at John Bunyan on the village greennever second, always the leader! Whether it was the game of cat on Sunday, or ringing the Church bells, or blasphemyhe was a prince in the devils camp! And when he became a Christian there was none like John Bunyan in thundering out the Law, or preachingfearless of pains and penaltiesthe Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Master Bunyan says in his Grace Abounding that he was very hopeful for England because the young men of his age were so very bad, since if God would convert them, they would make such good Christians by-andby. And I feel a little of his mindwhen I see a man come in here who is known to be a down-right sinner, I hope he may make an upright saint. Some have come in here who have been ringleaders and have exceeded others in their sin, but instead of saying, Their case is hopeless, I have thoughtnow let us pray with might and main that Sovereign Grace may overcome his sinwho knows what he may be able to accomplish for the Church if he is converted?

II. Now for a more pleasing picture, namely, THE TRUE CHRISTIAN ZEALOThow his zeal manifests itself, how it is kept up, and what is to be said in commendation of it. The Christian zealothow his zeal manifests itself! First, it manifests itself in his private dealings with God. The unconverted zealot is a hypocritehe does not come to God in private. He may use a form of private prayer, but he has no true communion with God alone. The unconverted zealot has a religion on the surface, but there is no Divine Grace within.

How different is it with the Christian! That is a remarkable passage in the Revelation where zeal is coupled with repentance. Be zealous, therefore, and repent. I may take this as an indication that when a true Christian is zealous he is zealous in repentancehis tears come welling up from his heart! Sin is not a little distasteful, but is exceedingly disgusting to him. His faith, too, is not merely a trembling recognition of the Truth of God, but it is a firm grasp of everlasting verities. The Christian zealot, when he is alone with God, throws his whole heart into his service. Whatever may be the Grace which is in exercise, he seeks to have it thoroughly

and actively at work.

If his heart is given to God, it is a heart full of holy fire, like a sacred censer. If he devotes himself in private to any hallowed deed of fellowship or communion with God, his heart wanders notor if it wanders, he contends with it until he has bound it with cordseven with cords to the horns of the altar! Brothers and Sisters, I wish you and I were more zealous! Alas, I have to complain of myself that when I try to pray, full often I cannot. When I would do good in the closet, evil is present with me. I wish I had power to walk with God as Enoch did, but the cares of the Church, let alone the vanities of life, will creep in and the soul comes out of the closet unrefreshed, very much because it has had no zeal in its closet exercises.

The true Christian zealot seeks, above all things, to make his private religion intensely energetic, knowing that it is the vital point of godliness. The Christian zealot may be recognized very manifestly by his prayers. Hear his utterances in the Prayer Meeting. It is no repetition of a set of sacred phrases, no going over the metaphors which have become time-worn and tedioushe prays like a man who means ithe comes up to Heavens gate, grasps the knocker and knocks and knocks and knocks again, waiting until the door is opened! He gets hold of the gates of Heaven and labors to shake them to and fro as though he would pull them upbolts and bars and all, as Samson did the gates of Gazarather than not prevail with God.

These men, like Elijah, have power to shut up Heaven or to open its gates. Oh, that we had more of such in our midst! We have a few who, as soon as they stand up to pray, fire our hearts by their earnestnessmay they be multiplied! The like is true, of course, of the private prayers of the Christian as well as of his public ones. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we need more resolve when we go before God that we will have the blessing! We need more determination that we are asking what is according to His mind and we will take no denial, but will say to the angel, I will not let You go except You bless me. Christians, seek to be zealots in prayer pouring out your hearts like water before the Lord and crying out with sighs and tears till, like your Master, you have been heard in that which you have petitioned.

But the zealot does not stop here. The Christian zealot is manifested in his jealousy for Gods honor. The word jealous in its sound and sense is akin to the word zealous. Hear how Elijah uses it. He says, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts. He saw Baal worshipped everywhere throughout Israel and his heart was ready to break. So the stern old man said, Let me dieI am no better than my fathers. How sternly he slew Baals priests! What a spectacle was that when, after having mocked them because no fire came on their sacrifice, he stretched out his hands and cried, Let it be known who is God! And when the flame had come and his own sacrifice had been consumed, he said with a rough voice, Take the Prophets of Baal. Let not one of them escape.

Here was zeal for the Lord of Hosts springing from an awful overwhelming jealousy for Gods honor and a hatred of the idols which usurped His Throne. See the same in Moses. With holy jealousy he dashes the tablets of stone upon the ground, takes the golden calf, grinds it to powder and makes a rebellious people drink of the bitter draught. Look at Phineas, again, when he saw the people committing adultery as a part of the unclean rites with which they worshipped the gods of Moab! He seized a javelin and ran them throughand so it is said the zeal of Phineas made an atonement before the Lord.

We want something of that kinda zeal for God which will smite all error with a ruthless hand! The iconoclastic zeal which will break to pieces images of silver and of gold, however prettily they may be cast or engravedwhich will tear down the toys of Popery and tread the whole in the mire as things worse than worthless because they come in the way of the Lord God of Hosts. Away with the softness which will not let some of my brethren denounce an error lest they should violate charity! The velvet in their mouths prevents their dealing with Antichrist as it ought to be dealt with. The day is come in which the Romish and Anglican Antichrists are to have no tender words used towards them!

It must be war to the knife for God and for His Truth against the lie which in modern times has impudence enough to show its face againI mean the lie that the sacrament can savethat Baptism can regenerate, or that the Lords Supper is a channel of salvation! Up with Divine Grace and down with Sacramentarianism! Up with the Truths of God forever and down with falsehood! A man is no zealot and cannot be called Zelotes unless he has a holy jealousy for the honor of Christ and His crown and His Truth!

Nor is this all. True zeal will show itself in the abundance of a mans labors and gifts. Paul commends the zeal of the Corinthians because they were always ready to minister to his necessities. He says, Concerning the ministering of the saints, you have no need that I speak unto you. Zeal labors for Christ. My Brethren, if you want a picture of zeal, take the Apostle. How he compasses sea and land! Storms cannot stop him! Mountains cannot impede his progress! He is beaten with rods, he is stoned he is cast into prisonbut the invincible hero of the Cross presses on in the holy war until he is taken up to receive a crown of glory! We do little or nothing, the most of uswe fritter away our time. O that we could live while we live!

But our existencethat is all we can call itour existence, what a poor thing it is! We run like shallow streamswe have not force enough to turn the mill of industry and have not depth enough to bear the vessel of progress! We have not flood enough to cheer the mends of poverty. We are dry too often in the summers drought and we are frozen in the winters cold. O that we might become broad and deep like the mighty stream that bears a navy and gladdens a nation! O that we may become inexhaustible and permanent rivers of usefulness through the abundant springs from where our supply comeseven the Spirit of the living God!

The Christian zealot may be known by the anguish which his soul feels when his labors for Christ are not successfulthe tears that channel his cheeks when sinners are not saved! Do not tell me of zeal that only moves the tongue, or the foot, or the hand! We must have a zeal which moves the whole heart! We cannot advance so far as the Saviors bloody sweatbut to something like it the Christian ought to attain when he sees the tremendous clouds of sin and the tempest of Gods gathering wrath! How can I see souls damned, without emotion? How can I hear Christs name blasphemed, without a shudder? How can I think of the multitudes who prefer ruin to salvation, without a pang?

Believe me, Brothers and Sisters, if you never have sleepless hours, if you never have weeping eyes, if your hearts never swell as if they would burst, you need not anticipate that you will be called zealous! You do not know the beginning of true zeal, for the foundation of Christian zeal lies in the heart. The heart must be heavy with grief and yet must beat high with holy ardor! The heart must be vehement in desire, panting continually for Gods Glory, or else we shall never attain to anything like the zeal which God would have us know.

And to close this point of how zeal manifests itself, let me say that it is always seen, where it is genuine, in a vehement love and attachment to the Person of the Savior. This is why we have not more zealbecause often the Christ preached is not a personal Christ. Have not I frequently said in this pulpit that nothing can make a man zealous like attachment to a person? When Napoleons soldiers won so many victories, and especially in the earlier part of his career, when against such deadly odds they earned such splendid triumphs, what was the reason?

The little corporal was there, and whenever it came to a desperate rush he was the first to cross the bridge or charge the enemy, always exposing himself to danger. And their attachment to his person and their love and admiration of his valor made them follow at his heels, swift to victory! Have not we heard of those who threw themselves in the way of the cannon ball to save his life? There could not have been such triumphs if there had not been a man who knew how to govern men by attaching them to himself.

And oh, the Person of the Savior! What attachment can there be equal to that which binds a Christian to his Lord? What person can there ever be out of whose lips come such golden chains to bind all hearts? When we see Him our hearts glow with sacred fervor! When we think of Him our soul is all on fire! What can we not do in His Presence? What will we not suffer when He cheers us? There are no impossibilitiesno, even difficulties have ceased to be when Jesus Christ shall come and our hearts are full of love to Him! It is a constant and unfailing sign of a true zealot that his attachment to his Masters Person is deep and fervent and he cannot forget Him who redeemed him by blood.

This brings us now, in the next place, to think awhile of how this zeal is maintained and kept up. To keep up a good fire of zeal we must have much fuel. The fire will partake of the quality of the fuel so that it must be good firing to make holy zeal. If I understand aright, zeal is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and genuine zeal draws its life and vital force from the continued operations of the Holy Spirit in the soul. Next to this, zeal feeds upon truths like theseit is stirred by the ruin of sinners. The very sight of sinners makes a right-hearted man zealous for their conversion.

Ride mile after mile through our streets. Turn down the narrower streets, enter the courts, go down the alleysdo not be disgusted with those tumbling housesgo in and go upstairs! See how many there are in one room. Mark what poverty, what squalor, what filth! Go into certain quarters and see what ignorance, what crime! I think the city missionary has constantly before him enough to keep his zeal at fever heat and if we, ourselves, went more often into some of the lowest dens of this huge city we should go back to our closets, crying, Gracious God! I have not thought of these people as I ought to do, for instead of being up and doing with all my might, I have been trifling and wasting my time.

Well, but what is London? This nation of Londonwhat is it? It is only a drop in the bucket compared with the millions that are still in darkness. Let any man think upon Hindustan. Let him reflect, if he will, upon China. Let him take any one country and consider that there is not a missionary to a million in many of those places and that the missionaries who are there might, many of them, as well have been at homefor they are missionaries who Christianize people by baptizing them and know little about the Spirits work upon the soul!

What is said about many of the converts made by mere ritual preaching and by baptismal ceremonies? Why it is well known that in some parts of heathendom the worst scoundrels are the nominal Christiansthe reason being because they were not made Christians by being convertedbut by being baptized and so an indelible dishonor is put upon Christ by carrying on missionary operations on the principle of baptizing people who are not Christians and labeling them the people of Christ while in their hearts they are more deceitful than the heathen themselves! We must think

only of the need there is for a sound, honest preaching of the Gospelthe preaching of the doctrines which really do change the souland the coming down of the Holy Spirit to deal personally with individuals.

All wholesale conversion of tribes and nations by calling them Christians when they are merely civilized is an evil and an abomination! The needs of the age are enough, if a man has any sense of what eternal realities are, to make us zealouszealous to the highest pitch. And next, Christian zeal feeds itself upon a sense of gratitude

*Loved of my God, for Him again,   
With love intense I burn,   
Chosen of Him before time began,   
I choose Him in return.*

Look to the hole of the pit from where you were dug and you will see abundant reason why you should spend and be spent for God! Zeal for God feeds itself upon the thought of the eternal future. It looks with tearful eyes down to the flames of Hell and it cannot slumberit looks up with anxious gaze to the glories of Heaven and it cannot but bestir itself. Zeal for God thinks of death and hears the hoofs of the white horse with the skeleton rider close behind. Zeal for God feels that all it can do is little compared with what is needed, and that time is short compared with the work to be doneand therefore it devotes all that it has to the cause of its Lord.

Above all, zeal for God feeds itself on love to Christ. Lady Powerscourt says somewhere, If we want to be thoroughly hot with zeal, we must go near to the furnace of the Saviors love. Get to know how Christ loved you and you cannot but love Him! Do but know how He was spit upon and despised and how He bled and died for us and we cannot but feel that we can do and bear all things for His names sake. Above all, Christian zeal must be sustained by a vigorous inner life. If we let our inner life dwindle, if it begins to be dwarfishif our heart beats slowly before Godwe shall not know zeal! But if all is strong and vigorous within, then we cannot but feel a loving anxiety to see the kingdom of Christ come and His will done on earth, even as it is in Heaven.

I have to close by commending zeal. Let my words be few, but let them be weighty here. In commending zeal, let me say I think it should commend itself to every Christian man and woman without a word of mine. But if you must have it, remember that God Himself is zealous. We read that when Christ comes as the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, then the government is to be upon His shoulders and of His kingdom there is to be no end. But Scripture adds, The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.

God has been zealous in judgment. Ezekiel tells us that God was zealous when He came forth to destroy His foes, but oh, how zealous He is in Divine Grace! It is a wonderful thing that we should use such language, but the Scripture is our warrant! When God puts His hands to the work of saving the elect He is filled with zeal! There is no slumber, no lack of diligence with God in the work of conversion and saving! For Zions sake He never rests! Nor will He rest till Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. God is earnest, God is zealous! Children of God, be imitators of Him!

Christ was zealous. We read of Him that the zeal of Gods House had eaten Him up and when He took the scourge of small cords and purged the temple, John tells us that it was written of Him, The zeal of Your House has eaten Me up. A Prophet tells us that He was clothed with zeal as with a cloak. He had not zeal over a part of Him, but was clothed with it as with some great cloak covering Him from head to foot. Christ was all zeal. Do you not know that I must be about My Fathers business? is one of His utterances, while yet a Child. And from the very first to the last it was His meat and His drink to do His Fathers will.

At what a rate He drove! How swift the chariot wheels of duty went with Him till the axles grew hot with speed! Brethren, you have Christ for an example. Does not this suffice you? Surely I can only descend in argument, but not ascendsee the holy angels who are to be your blessed companionsare they not flames of fire? Are they not called seraphs because they fly like flames upon their Masters errands? Be not slow where angels are like flashes of lightning if we would see any success come to the Churchand I know that is dear to us! If we would see souls convertedand I know it is the object of our daily prayers! If we would hear the cry that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christand I know that this is our passionate desire!

If you would see crowns put upon the head of the Savior and His Throne lifted highand I know this is your great ambition! If you would see Jehovah, your Father, glorified even to the ends of the earththen be filled with zeal! Under God, the way of the worlds conversion must be by the zeal of the Church. Simon the Zealot must lead the van. The rest may follow in their placesknowledge, patience, courage, prudence, every grace shall do exploitsbut this shall be first, this shall bear the standard high! Zeal for God, zeal for His Truththis shall be in the van, and may you stand side by side with the most zealous in the day of conflict, that you may be there in the hour of victory.

I cannot, this morning, address you as I would desire, for I cannot feel my own zeal to be what I would have it be. O for the zeal of Wesley and Whitfield! The zeal of men who were always preaching or praying, men who seemed as if they knew no weariness, or shook it off as dust from off their feet! Oh, to have the zeal of apostolic times again, when the very least among you should be ready to be martyrs for Christ if need be! And when all of you should testify of Him, wherever you were called to go. Oh

for more zeal in the household, that you might seek more anxiously the conversion of your children! More zeal in the workshop, that you might communicate to your fellow workmen the spirit which actuates and moves you!

Oh for more zeal in the Church and Church Meetings and Prayer Meetings, that everything might be done with spirit! Above all, oh, for more zeal in the pulpit! Holy fire come down! We have the wood, we have the altar, we have the sacrificebut we need the fire! Have you not remarked, Brothers and Sisters, how much a man may do who is clothed with zeal? Some of our Brethren in the ministry to whom we have listened have stirred our passions, have made our blood boil after a sacred fashion and yet their talents have been very few and we felt while they were speaking that they made better use of one talent than some have made of ten.

Believe me, it is not the extent of your knowledge, though that is useful. It is not the extent of your talent or tact, though these have their place. It is your zealyour ZEAL that shall perform Gods work! May I entreat you, as members of this Church, not to let your zeal die out. What Prayer Meetings we have had! Shall we ever forget Park Streetthose Prayer Meetings when I felt compelled to let you go without a word from my lips because the Spirit of God was so awfully present that we felt bowed to the dustand any language of mine would have been a mere impertinence?

What zeal you have had! Some of you have sought for the conversion of souls. When I look upon some of you I know you are spiritual mothers and fathers in Israelnot to ones or twos, but scores! Shall your zeal relax? We have, by Gods Grace, lived to see many of our enemies clothed with shame. We have preached the Word till that Word begins to tell and make the solid rocks of error shake. Will you draw back? Will you lose your force? Will you slacken in prayer? Will you refuse to receive the blessing which awaits you? Will you take your heads from the crown when it is ready to descend? I pray you do not so! Let us be banded together as one man! Let us contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints! Let us pray with fervor! Let us live in holiness! Let us preach constantly and preach with fire! And let us so live that we may impress our age and leave our footprints on the sands of time.

As for some of you who never were zealouswho are the fathers of no spiritual children. As for some of youwhose religion gets into a very narrow compass and is good for very little when it gets thereI pray you bestir yourselves. If your religion is a lie, do not profess it! If it is a farce, do not enslave yourselves to it!

But if there is anything in religion, it is worth everything! It cannot sit second at the tableit must have the first place. The Christian man is to be, first of all, a Christian man! Next to that a tradesman or what you willbut first of all a Christian man. The first thing with the Believer is his Lord. Christ will be nowhere if He is not first and chief and that religion is vain and void which does not fill the soul and take up the throne of the heart.

May God allow us, then, to wear the character, if not the name of Simon the Zealot, and then we will wait at His footstool and serve Him after such sort as He shall help us to do and His shall be all the praise. But, ah, we must be converted first! So let the sinner remember that his first business is with this textBelieve on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be savedthat is, trust Jesus, for it is written, He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned. God grant you Divine Grace to trust Christ and then to be zealous for Him. Amen.

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THE HEROIC IN CHRISTIANITY   
NO. 1584

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY-MORNING, FEBRUARY 20, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**For if you love them which love you, what credit is that to you? For sinners also love those that love them. And if you do good to them which do good to you, what credit is that to you? For sinners also do even the**

**same. And if you lend to them of whom   
you hope to receive, what credit   
is that to you? For sinners also**

**lend to sinners, to receive as much again.   
Luke 6:32-34.**

BRETHREN in Christ, every Word which proceeds out of our Masters lips is precious to us. We make no distinction between His promises and His precepts, but prize every syllable above rubies. A doctrine from Him we value beyond the much fine gold and a command is equally high in our esteem. Whether His teaching is practical or doctrinal, whether it is intended to guide the feet or to encourage the heart, we are equally rejoiced at it

*All His words are music, though they make us weep;*

*Infinitely tender, infinitely deep.*   
All the discourses of Jesus are the Words of God to our soul, whether they convey to us instruction, warning, rebuke, invitation or consolation. As all His garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia, so are all His words most sweet to our taste. We have not so learned Christ as to be pickers and choosers when the fruits of His lips are before us. Yet I have known professors of that sort, who would gladly tear the Masters vesture that they might have only the softest part of it to be a pillow for their idle heads.

That, they say, was a Gospel sermon, sweet food for our souls, because it happened to tell of what Christ has done for us. But on the next occasion they cry out, That was not a Gospel sermon! It was legal! It laid a burden upon our shoulders, because it dared to tell of what Christ has commanded us to do for Him. Those men, it seems to me, accept Christ for a servant rather than for a Master! They are glad that He shall do this or that for themthat He shall, in fact, gird Himself and wait at their table while they sit down to meat. But if they had learned better, they would have chosen Christ for a Master and would have been willing to gird themselves at His command and wait on their Lord, counting it their honor to be servants of so Divine a Prince!

Feeling certain that you are not of that order of religious cavilers, but that you will accept anything that comes from Christ, I am glad to have a practical subject this morning. The Sermon on the Mount is as full of the Light of God to you as the Transfiguration on the Mount. You are as glad to hear what the Son of God has to say by way of precept as to hear what the Father had to say by way of recognition of His Son. As for this sermon in the plain, it was preceded by miracles, but it is as forcible to you as the signs and wonders could have made it had you seen them all! The sick touched His garment and were restored and those who were possessed of devils were healedyou rejoice at the miracles of Christ, but you see Him to be as mighty in word as in deedand you adore Him for His gracious teachings which remain to us after His miracles have ceased.

Here you have certain of the Words of Christ and may His Spirit bless them to your hearts. Brothers and Sisters, in the matters of which I shall have to speak this morning in the name of the Lord, taken, as I am quite certain, from His own Words, there will be some things strange and unusual which may possibly sound harshly in your ears. Be not astonished, for the Gospel is one of those thoughts of God which is not our thought the whole system which Christ has ushered in is foreign to men, being as far above them as the heavens are above the earth! Our Lords Kingdom is not of this world, otherwise His servants would do many things which now they forbear to do. The conduct of the subjects of that Kingdom must not be measured by the manners of others, for they are a people as peculiar as the Kingdom to which they belong.

We have heard persons say, I do not see it to be my duty to be so precise; it is not customary. What have you and I to do with custom? If things are right, but not in fashion, let us start the fashion! And when it is the fashion to do wrong, let us be desperately unfashionable! Our Master, evidently, from the verses before us, did not come into the world to teach us to conform to the ways of our fellow men! He would have us go far beyond the ordinary conduct of our fellows. He asked in His Sermon on the Mount, What do you more than others? He ordains a standard far above the common standard of mankind when He says, again and again, What credit is that to you? For sinners also do even the same.

Oh, one may say at the close of my sermon, the preacher demands more of us than can reasonably be expected from flesh and blood. Your charge is correct! But then, the preacher is not addressing himself to you as to flesh and blood, but as to those who are possessed of a far higher principle, namely, the indwelling Spirit of God! True Believers walk not after the flesh, nor do they mind the things of it, for they are clothed with the energy of the Spirit of God and by His power their lives are lifted above the common walks of men. If it is so that the Spirit of God dwells in you, you are of another nature than the men of this worldand it is to be expected that you should live after a nobler fashion.

What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness? We live under a spirit whose Law is perfection and, therefore, a little fault causes us much self-condemnation. We judge ourselves by a severer rule than we would apply to others, for our privileges and responsibilities are exceptionally great. I allow in other men what I would denounce in myself. I could approve in some men actions which, to me, also, would be lawful but would not be expedient upon the higher rule of glorifying God in all things! When I have heard of certain deeds of unconverted and unenlightened men, I have excused them, saying, Poor souls, considering who they are and where they are, their conduct is not so heavily to be blamed. And yet if I had behaved one half as badly, there would have been rebellion and presumption in the deed!

For favored children there is a different law from that which governs common subjects. That which is passed over in strangers is atrocious when it comes from a bosom friend. You are not under Law, but under Grace and, being under Grace, you feel the force of a constraint even holier and higher than mere Law could put upon you. If you are what you profess to be, my Brothers and Sisters, more is expected from you than from any other men beneath the sun and, therefore, I shall throw aside all hesitancy in setting before you a supreme standard and asking of you what we never can get from sinners, nor from men of the world. Know you not that your Lord has said, Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the Kingdom of Heaven?

If I were called to address an ordinary company of men and women upon feats of valor, I might speak with bated breath if I exhorted them to heroism in war. But if I had lived some thousands of years ago and had been called upon to talk to Spartan warriors all equipped for battlemen engraved and scored with the scars of conflictI should set no bounds to my exhortations! I would bestir them as a lion arouses the young lions and urges them to the prey. I should tell them that their name and parentage should not be disgraced by the idea of defeat, but that they must expect victory and seize it as their right! No orator would have spoken to Spartans as to Baeotiansit was their very life and business to fightand deeds of prowess were, therefore, to be expected of them.

Is it not so with you, you followers of the Crucified? Your martyrs and confessors call upon you to lead a life beyond that of common men. I say all this because to certain of you a sort of apology may seem necessary for the strong things that may be said before you at this time. May Gods Holy Spirit come upon you and make you strong enough for all the strong things, glorifying Himself in your weakness!

I. Our first observation in plunging into our discourse is this. MUCH THAT IS NATURALLY GOOD MAY FALL FAR SHORT OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. Do not make the mistake of saying that moral excellence is not good. Some have broadly declared that there is no good thing in an unconverted man, but this is scarcely true. It will generally be so understood that its meaning will be false and this is a great pitwe must not utter falsehoods in order to honor God. There is a great deal of goodgood under certain senses and aspects of the term, goodin many unconverted people. Many who are total strangers to the Grace of God exhibit sparkling forms of the human virtues in integrity, generosity, kindness, courage, self-sacrifice and patience.

I could wish that some who call themselves Christians were, in certain respects, as good as others whom I know of who have never borne the Christian name! It is always right to speak the truth and truth obliges me to say as much as this. This ought to make professors very seriously in earnest to judge themselves lest they should mistake natural amiability and morality for the fruit of the Spirit of God. If the question is whether our character is the offspring of Nature or of Grace, it will be a sad thing if the verdict should turn out to be that it is the dead child of Nature finely dressed, but not the living child of Divine Grace!

We may be decorated with gems which glitter and glow and yet they may be mere paste and none of them the work of Gods Spirit. We may be adorned from head to foot with that which is lovely and of good repute, but, for all that, we may come short of what God requires of us because inwardly our heart is not in accordance with our outward array. The platter is clean, it could not be cleanerbut while the filth remains withinit cannot be acceptable with God. Observe the three things mentioned in the text against which there is no law, but of which much is to be spoken in commendation. These acts are good, but they do not come up to Christs standard.

The first is, If you love them which love you. It is very proper and seemly that kindly feelings should awaken kindly feelings in return. To those who are friendly to us, we should also be friendly. We say, Love begets love, and it is natural that it should do so. Yet I am sorry to say that though this is no more than a natural excellence, it is not, by any means, so common as to be universal. There are children who do not love parents who toiled and slaved for them in their childhoodthey grow up to exhibit a strange hardness of heart to the authors of their existence. I know brothers who do not love the most affectionate and amiable of sisters and it is grievous to have to add that there are many husbands, brutal husbands, who do not love their wives who are sacrificing their lives out of love to them and their little ones.

I blush to think of the many instances which I could quote, but there is no needyou know it is so! Thousands have never reached so high as this standard, If you love them which love you. But even if we reach as high as that, it is by no means a great attainment, is it? Our Lord says that sinners also love those that love them. Divine Grace is not needed to make a man the loving husband of a tender wife! Divine Grace is not needed to make affectionate sons and daughterswe see them all around us! I am sure it does not require Grace in the hearts of the bulk of you to make you feel kindly towards those who treat you in a friendly manner! For sinners also love those that love them.

You have all come as far as that and such feeling is goodthe more of it the better! Yet it is not up to the mark of Christs teaching if it stands alone! It is not that for which the Holy Spirit has begotten us again! It is not that for which Christ has shed His precious blood! Higher virtue exists than that which loves them that love you! And here it iswe are to love them that hate us and treat us despitefully! Can you love those who will not mention your name without grinding their teeth in envy, or sneering in scorn? Can you love those who have belied your character, who have done the best they can to ruin you and who will do the same again?

Can you feel towards them an earnest desire for their present and eternal welfare? If you could do them good, would you delight to do it and repeat the deed until you had made them too happy to be malicious, too much indebted to continue at enmity? This would be glorious, indeed, especially if you could keep clear of all selfish motives in such a contest of love and would do it all, not because you want to seem a hero or to be something great, but simply because you delight to do good and feel it to be a pleasure to do that good where it is most needed, namely, where the spirit of enmity has the greatest power. This is high and I think I hear someone say, I cannot attain it! I can love those who love me, but loving those that hate me is another matter! I shall have to look at the matter two or three times before I attempt it. I dare say you will, my Friend, and that is why it needs the work of God, Himself, to make us Christians! It needs Father, Son and Holy Spirit to work miracles of Divine Grace within as before we become Godlike. Godliness is Godlikeness and this is not easy to attain.

The next thing, in the verses before us, is grateful return. If you do good to them which do good to you, what credit is that to you? It is a very right thing that if persons have served us, we should endeavor to repay the benefit. By common consent, one good turn deserves another. I am sorry to say that though this is a very ordinary sort of virtue, it is not the most common thing in the world, for you may help others if you like, but I have heard that they do not always help you in return! I cannot speak from any painful experience, here, for all have been kind to me and I have had good measure, pressed down and running over, poured into my bosom. But I have met with men who have bitterly bewailed the ingratitude of those whom they had benefited. They claim to have helped others generously, but when their turn has come to need assistance they have not received itI do not feel very sure about the aforesaid claimbut that is the way in which they talk.

It is certainly a horrible thing that men should be ungrateful but yet, supposing that you, dear Hearer, are grateful and have lately taken special pains to do good to one who was good to you, what credit is that to you? You have done what you ought to have done and no more! You have paid an old debt as every honest man should do, but this does not prove you to be a Christian, for Christianity includes this and rises above it like the Alps above the surrounding plain! Followers of Jesus are called upon to do good to those who have done them harm. You know the old saying, Evil for good is devil-like, evil for evil is beast-like, good for good is manlike, good for evil is God-like? Rise to that God-like point! If a man has taken the bread out of your mouth, seize the first opportunity to help him to a livelihood. If he has bespattered you, be ready to forgive him, but say not a word against him! Watch for a time when, by great kindness, you may heap coals of fire on his head.

Hard teaching, says one. I know it is and harder doing, but it is blessed doing! It is sweet to render good for evil! There is a self-conquest about it which ennobles the soul more than the conquest of an empire! There is a getting near to Christ in such actions that has about it more of Heaven than all besides! That patient, persevering rendering of benefits for injuries, returning of favors for enmity gives us fellowship with Him who, when we were enemies, laid down His life for us! Oh, taste of this sweet Grace of forgiveness and see if it is not good! If you have before now never known Christian joy, you shall know it then! It is a high virtue. Nevertheless, to this we must come if we are to be the followers of Christ.

Again, you note in the 34

th verse that mention is made of helping others in a neighborly way with the expectation of their returning the friendly deed. If you lend to them of whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Temporary help is often rendered in the expectation that if ever we are in the same need, we shall only need to ask and receive the same aid. I lend you an axe and you will, one day, lend me a saw. You borrow my pail and you will lend me your flat irona neighborly sort of barter which goes on all around and ought to go onbut there is nothing very wonderful in it, for, after all, it is a sort of laying by in storemaking your neighbor your banker for a while! I help you and you help mea very proper thing to do and the more of such brotherly and neighborly cooperation, the betterbut still, there is nothing so very virtuous in it.

What credit is that to you? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. You as a Christian are to rise to something higher than thisnamely, to be ready to help without the expectation of being helped againready to aid those who you are certain could not help you! You must be ready to help those who are too poor, even, to come to your rescue, yes, and ready to help those who would not help you if they could who may even return your kindness with words of falsehood and acts of unkindness! Can you rise to this? For this is to be a Christian! This is to be like your heavenly Father who sends His rain upon the just and upon the unjust; who causes His sun to shine upon the fields of the churl as well as upon the gardens of the liberal! This is to be like your Master who gives and gives and gives and receives nothing in return!

It is the Glory of God that He is too great, too full, too glorious to be dependent upon us! He is an ever-flowing Fountain, pouring forth incalculable torrents of infinite blessings upon the sons of men! After our measure we are to be the samewe are to aspire to the higher happiness of which our Lord said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Here is the dignity, the heavenliness of happinessnot to be receiving from othersbut to be freely distributing to them. May God help us to imitate our God in doing good, hoping for nothing in return! Thus, Brothers and Sisters, I think I have shown you that there are certain good things in the world which, nevertheless, do not reach to the standard of Christian virtue. This holds good of all religions actions. You go to the House of Godso do the heathens go to the house of their god. You spend certain times in prayer so do the Muslims.

You are very devoutso are Parsees. You are known to be a religious manso were a great many who have turned out to be rogues. You are a deacon, or other Church officeryes, so were certain bank directors who were none the more honest for that. But you are a preacher, yes, and so was Judas who hanged himself and so went to his own place. Religious acts count for nothing unless there is a true heart at the back of them! These things ought we to have done, but if we leave heart work undone, nothing is done! Sinners also perform their religious acts and besides these, some of them exhibit many external virtues and yet they manifestly fail to approach the standard or Christian virtue. The road is the same and men may travel in it apparently in the same directionand yet they may be journeying with totally different motivesthe first may be on the Kings business, the next may be a footpad and the third an escaped convict running from justice.

The same thing may be done by a hundred different men and apparently done in the same way and yet only one of them may be doing it in Gods way and doing it with the sincere motive of honoring and glorifying Godthe 99, though studiously aiming to make the outward action correct, may, nevertheless, fail as to acceptance with God because their motive and spirit are altogether wrong. Oh, it shames me when I sit down and look over my life and enquire, Is this a life a Christian ought to live? Does not the same question arise in your minds? Do you not feel, in many points, that even unconverted men have excelled you? Do you not know some persons who are not Christians who are, nevertheless, more patient than you in the endurance of pain? Do you not know unbelievers who are generous to a high degree and show much of self-sacrifice in helping their poor neighbors? Do you not know men whose devotion to science is greater than your devotion to Christ?

Are there not within your knowledge persons who have loved their country better than you have loved your Lord? Do not these thoughts provoke you to something better? They make me blush and cause my heart to weep! What manner of person ought I to be, when those who do not profess to know the mysteries of everlasting love rise to such courage in battle, such endurance in pushing over seas of ice? What ought I to become when my Lord calls me to be His disciple? Where are the fruits of my discipleship? What am I doing to bring Him honor? If even a text like this staggers me and I say it is a hard lesson, where, where must I be in the sight of God who sees all my failures?

II. Secondly, dear Friends, I want you to notice that CHRISTIAN VIRTUE IS, IN MANY RESPECTS, EXTRAORDINARY AND MIGHT BE CALLED HEROIC. To illustrate this, I will confine myself to the Gospel according to Luke. In the passage that we have been reading we evidently have a form of virtue which is quite out of the ordinary range of mens thoughts. It concerns love. Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. In the point of love, kindness, consideration for mens needs and desire to do good, the Christian life is to rise above every other till it becomes sublime! Heathen moralists recommended kindness, but they did not suggest its being lavished upon enemies.

I have been somewhat amused by the caution of Cicero. He says, Kindness must not be shown to a youth, nor to an old mannot to the aged, because he is likely to die before he can have an occasion to repay you the benefitand not to the young man, for he is sure to forget it. Those of as who are middle-aged may value the orators generosity as we like, but we may reflect that he only recommends its exercise towards us because we are likely to be good debtors and pay back what we receive, perhaps, with interest! That gentle laugh which ripples over the congregation is the best refutation of such barefaced selfishness! Our Lord bids us seek no reward from men and He assures us that then a greater reward will come! We shall, by shunning it, secure it! We shall find a reward in being unrewarded!

See how our Lord puts itWhen you make a dinner or a supper, call not your friends, nor your brethren, neither your kinsmen, nor your rich neighbors lest they, also, bid you again and a recompense be made you. But when you make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind: and you shall be blessed; for they cannot recompense you: for you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. Next, read Luke 9:54, 55 and you will see that the Christian is to rise above human passion in the matter of gentleness. James and John, when Christ was not received by the Samaritan villagers, said, Will You that we command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them? But Jesus rebuked them and said, You know not what manner of spirit you are of, for the Son of Man did not com to destroy mens lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

A Christian should be ready to give way. He should be quiet, peaceable, gentle. If, in trying to do good, he wishes to bless certain people and they refuse to hear him, let him not grow indignant and denounce the offenders, but let him change the scene and carry his message to those who, perhaps, are hungering for it! He may go round, again, very shortly to those who repulsed him and find them in a better mind. Be gentle, Brothersoft words are hard to answer. They refused you at first, try them again! At any rate, be not provoked, for then they will have conquered you. Christians ought to be the gentlest beings under Heaven they are sent forth as lambs among wolvesand they are called to be harmless as doves. Such meekness will astonish and amaze their adversaries and crown the religion of Jesus with honor.

In the elevation of his joy, the Christian is also to rise above all other men. He may rejoice as they do in the common bounties of Providence, but that joy is to hold very secondary rank. Even in his own success as a Christian worker he takes but measured satisfaction. Read Luke 10:20 and see what is the source of his truest delightNotwithstanding in this, rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven. Is not a Believer a wonderful being, since even spiritual power and victory over the devil do not excite him, but he finds his joy in a fact which is quite out of himself and fixed by the unchangeable decree of God?

The Christian is heroic, next, in his fearlessness. Turn to the 12th chapter, verse 4 and there find Christ saying to His disciplesBe not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him, which after He has killed, has power to cast into Hell. The genuine Christian stands not in fear of public opinion and dreads not the frown of those whom God frowns upon. The true Believer is to be willing to bear reproach, yes, and to bear much more than reproach, as saints of God have done time out of mind. So far from flinching from suffering, we are not even to give it a thought as to how we shall speak if we are brought before kings and rulers, for a part of the Christians heroism is to lie in his calm self-possession.

See how the Lord puts it in the 11th verse: When they bring you unto the synagogues and unto magistrates and powers, take you no thought how or what thing you shall answer, or what you shall say: for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what you ought to say. The same man who is so gentle that if men will not listen to him, he goes elsewhere, is so steadfast that he cannot be silenced! Bold as a lion he stands before his accusers and he is not troubled as to how he shall put his words together, for he relies upon the indwelling Spirit whom the world cannot receive because it sees Him not, neither knows Him! Relying upon that Spirit, he speaks when the time comes to speak and it is the right word, as his adversaries are compelled to confess! Or he is silent while it is time to be silent and even in that silence there is an awe which is felt by those round about him. After this fashion is he to play the man.

See how far the true Believer is lifted up above the world, as you turn to Luke 12:22 where the Lord bids us cultivate a holy ease of heart as to all temporal things. The rich man finds his wealth in his bursting barns, but the Believer finds his treasure in the all-sufficiency of His God. The Savior says, Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat; neither for the body, what you shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knows that you have need of these things. See, Brothers and Sisters, the Spirit of God is to lift us up above all fretful careswe are to feel that the Father will provide for us in this world and that Jesus will never leave us comfortless.

Because He is our Shepherd and we cannot want, we are to dwell at ease and lie down in green pastures like a peaceful, restful flock. Covetousness is not to approach us, for a mans life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. The desire to heap together a vast mass of wealth prevents the enjoyment of that which is already gained and this must not come near an heir of Heaven! As to temporal things, we are to be constantly calm, content, grateful and trustful, relying upon the bounty of our God. This freedom from anxiety constitutes a main part of the Christian character and is so uncommon as to lift its possessor far above men of the world.

Another point in which Christian heroism is seen is in humility and in delight in service. Turn to the 14th chapter and see our Lords directions to His disciples not to seek out the highest, but rather the lowest place, for, He says, Whoever exalts himself shall be abased and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. Habitually a Christian man is to have a modest esteem of himself. He is never to be known as one who is forward, selfseeking, self-asserting. Men who are highly esteemed of themselves are seldom justified by the verdict of their fellow men. No, a Christian man is to be one who is ready to do anything for the good of others, however lowly the service. He will wash the saints feet. He will be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord, if he may but serve his Brothers and Sisters and glorify his Master.

Where are these Christian people? asks a hearer. Where are these good and humble people? I cannot find them! Are you not one of them, yourself? If you are not, make the confession and go before God and ask Him to set you right. And when you are of a lowly, loving spirit, yourself, you will find others of a like mind! I must admit that they are not easy to come by, but when you are meek and lowly you will find them on the principle that like draws to like and birds of a feather flock together. That is not the Christian spirit which turns even the kingdom of Heaven into an arena for ambition, but that man has the mind of Christ who becomes the servant of all for Christs sake. That is not the Christian spirit which, under pretense of seeking liberty in the Church, craves after lordship and self-display. Those who are under this influence will have no rule in the Church of God except their own rulethey are too heady and highminded to submit themselves to those who are over them in the Lord. The spirit of Christianity is lowly, yielding, easily to be entreated, seeking not itself. This is a chief point in the peculiarity of the peculiar people.

Furthermore, there should be about the Christian a faith which there is not in an other. (See Luke 17:6). He should have an eye to see that which is invisible and an arm to lean on that which he cannot feel. He should act upon facts which others may accept as theories but would never dream of risking a shilling upon. Believers, you are to be the men and women who can say to mountains, Become plains, and to sycamine trees, Be you plucked up by the roots. You are to work miracles, not physical and material, but spiritual and mental which are no less, but even more marvelous than wonders of healing or resurrection!

The next verse of this 17th chapter shows us that Christians are to be men of service. They are not to think that they came into the world to sit at a banquet, but they are to wait on their Master while He sits at the table. Too many appear to consider that the services of the sanctuary are intended merely to feed themthey never look upon the House of God as a barracks for soldiers, or a place where workmen come together to sharpen their toolsthey only regard it as a sacred buttery, a spiritual larder, or a heavenly refectory where much is to be received and little or nothing returned. O Brothers and Sisters, we must get out of the cramping influence of the spirit which makes even religion a selfish provision for ourselves! We must scorn that skulking away from trouble and fatigue which creeps over men of growing years and increasing wealth!

We are to SERVE, not to recline at our ease! What are we doing that we are so anxious to rest ourselves and benefit ourselves? The Lord Jesus Christ would not have us always be asking, How can I be happy? How can I obtain spiritual enjoyment? Servants are not supposed to spend their time in doing their own pleasure and seeking their own profit. A man-servant whose whole time was taken up with watching his own wealth would be of small value to his employer. Even so, we have something else to do beyond watching over our own inward feelings! To snatch a brand from the burning is better than to warm your own hands! To feed a hungry soul with the Bread of Heaven is a far higher deed than to eat the fat and drink the sweet yourself! There is more plunging your arm up to the elbow in the mire to find a jewel for Christ than in washing ones idle hands with the scented soap of respectable propriety.

Oh, to get clean away from all ideas of self-seeking in religion! We are, first of all, saved by Grace like drowning mariners snatched from the deepbut afterwards we are taught to man the lifeboat, ourselves, for the rescue of others from destruction! Christianity finds me a soldier wounded in battle and it heals my woundsbut it does far more than thatit girds me with armor, it gives me a sword, it teaches me to fight and it makes a hero of me if I yield myself to its full power! God grant it may do this for every one of us!

III. I will now close with the reflection that THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION SUPPLIES DUE NOURISHMENT FOR THE MOST HEROIC LIFE. Bear with me while I show you this in a few sentences. First, the economy of Grace requires it. You and I must have been chosen to lead a life higher than that of ordinary men or else why all this noise and stir at all? We see Heaven and earth and Hell in motion. God vacates His Throne and becomes a Man. Immortality puts on flesh and blood and dies! The Holy Spirit comes to dwell in these bodies of clay while angels look on and wonder! Surely here is the groundwork and argument of something supremely good!

Look at that angel, bright and sparkling like a flame of fire! What trouble did it cost the Creator to make him? A thought sufficed to do it. God willed it and there stood the helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim before Him in all their glittering ranks. What will that creature be which has been the subject of eternal purposes, which has cost the Father the heartpang of giving up His only Soncost the Son a bloody sweatcost the Spirit the exercise of His Omnipotence? Such a creature you and I shall yet become. We are on the road to it! Great things ought to come of us if that is what we are and are growing to. May this thought nourish us to the highest life.

Think again, Brethren, we are helped to holy heroism by the reward which it brings, for our blessed Master, though He bids us spurn the thought of reward on earth, yet tells us that there is a reward in the thing itself! Just follow my text in the 35th verseLove your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great. What reward? Why, the reward of having done good! That is quite enough. If you go to your brother who has treated you so badly, and say, Brother, we are going to be friends, and you manage to heal all wounds, you will not need any other reward! You will sleep sweetly at night and the music that awakes you in the morning will be sweet as the bells of Heaven.

Suppose you have an enemy and persistently do him all the good you can? You will not wish to be paid for itit is such a grand thing to have acted like a Christian that you will be blessed in the deed! I believe that martyrs at the stake, when they stood and burned for Christ, felt in every pang thousand times rewarded by possessing the Grace which enabled them to endure to the end! They felt, We are doing the right thing. We are testifying to the Truth of our beloved Lord. And if they had possessed a thousand lives, they would cheerfully have laid all down for Jesus! Therefore, do not be so mercenary as to expect to be paid in dirty bronze and tarnished silver, but ask to find your recompense in the Spirit by which you are led to do good and in the smile of your heavenly Father!

Then, remember this to fire your ambitionyou shall be children of the Highest! Those who can rise into the heroic life shall be as God! The gentle, patient, peaceable, kind, loving, forgiving, affectionatethese shall be known to be the sons of God and is this nothing? Oh, if there is a grain of nobility in your natures, you will make this the highest ambition of your livesto be like God! What is more than that? We are expected to be like God because we are His children! You shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. We expect to see something of the father in the child. If we are children of God, we ought to do what others never think of. If you are the children of God, remember what a Brother you have and what an example He has set for you. He disdained to live unto Himself, for He left the Throne of Glory to come down to Bethlehems manger, to a carpenters shop and to a servants life!

The other night I heard read at family prayer the story of our Lord at the supper table. Jesus, knowing that He came from God and went to God, took a towel and girded Himself and began to wash His disciples feet. Ah, when I thought of Him whom all Heaven worshipsour blessed, blessed Masteractually coming round with a basin to wash the disciples feet, I felt my eyes fill with tears and I sympathized with Peter when he cried, Do You wash my feet? It seemed a stoop too great for our Lord and King thus to act a menials part. Is there anything which can seem too mean for you and me after beholding such condescension?

If that sight touches you not, let me remind you of a further sceneHe went into Gethsemane and there He knelt and prayed for you and me until He was covered with a gory sweat and great drops of blood followed each other to the ground! Is there any pain that we would not face? Is there any reproach we could not bear after this, for His dear sake? Does not that awaken you? Will you, after this, be proud and claim honor from your brethren and grow angry if it is refused? Come with me once again, for He goes to the Cross and there He hangs. It is your Lord, remember! See, the iron pass through His handsit is your Lord who is thus maimed! The nails tear through His feetthe feet of your Lord! He wears a diadem as monarch, but it is a coronet of thornsit is your Lord who is thus crowned! He wears crimson, too, but it is His own bloodand He is your own Lord!

He has not a rag, for they have stripped Him, yes, stripped and scourged your Lord! And they are hissing at Him, jesting at His prayers and scoffing at His criesall this at your Lord! And what of you? The other day you were ashamed to acknowledge that you were His disciple. Are you not disgusted at such cowardice? You were silent the other day when sinners were blaspheming Himyou were stingy when His poor people needed help! You refused to give when His Church and His cause knocked at your door! You would not forgive a fellow Christian the other day and you parted company with one who had been your friend for yearsand all for a hot word!

And yet you call yourself a Christian? Yes, and I, too, am a Christian and have my own private cause for self-humiliationand that is our Master bleeding there. How can we bear to look Him in the face? What sorry disciples we are! O blessed Master, let Your blood drop on us till You have blotted out these many faults of ours and made us like Yourself! Amen and amen!

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1248 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE CHOICE OF A LEADER   
NO. 1248

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 1, 1875, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And he spoke a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but everyone that is perfect shall be as his master. Luke 6:39, 40.**

MAN can hardly be retained in the place of wisdom, even if brought there. Truth lies between two extremes and man, like a pendulum, swings either too much this way or that. He abides not long in one place, but tosses from side to side, never, except by Divine Grace, finding rest in the middle point of wisdom. Two extremes exist in reference to the pilgrimage and scholarship of life. Some assert that man needs no guide whatever. Is he not a noble creature, gifted with high intelligence? Can he not reason and judge, and understand and discern? He can surely find his own way without direction from without. As a learner, why does he need a teacher? He can instruct himself! Is he not possessed of science? Has he not already found out many inventions?

Such self-sufficient boasters will not, therefore, condescend to sit at the feet of a master, or follow the track of a guideand, consequently, they frequently become erratic, singular, lawless and unreasonable in their modes of thought and action. Into the mazes of infidelity and atheism such pilgrims wander! Into foolishness and strong delusion such teachers of themselves conduct their own minds. This scheme is dangerous, but its opposite pole is not less so. Deliver a man from rationalism and he often swings into superstition, and says, I see that I need a guide, I will take the one nearest to me.

Finding a guide constituted by this authority or that, the man who has ceased to use his judgement surrenders himself, at once, to his leadership and reckons that to question is to be guilty of wicked unbelief. Without considering whether the guide is a seeing man or blind, or the teacher an instructed and qualified instructor, the credulous yield themselves up to priests or leaders and are sorely misled. Weary of thinking, they beg others to think for them and there they leave the matter. This is the religion of a great many and they find much in itthe peace of slumbering stupidity! They meet with a church which claims to be venerable for antiquity and then they believe whatever that church chooses to teach!

They consider that they have no right any longer to judge or to use their understanding. They hang conscience and reason in a sling, as if they were broken arms, no longer usable, and give themselves up to be wheeled about like invalids in the chairs of tradition and dogmatism. They do not dare to questionthat would spoil the whole thingthey shut their eyes and let other people see for them. No, they shut their eyes to be guided by blind men! They give up thinking, to be directed by those who

have also given up thinking, who have long ago shut their eyes and opened their mouths to take in whatever a supreme council or a pope may please to put into them.

Between these two extremes there is a narrow path of right, and happy is he who finds itnamely, the honestly and sincerely judging of whom the leader and teacher should be. This leads to the discovery that a Leader has been appointed in the Person of the Lord Jesus and a teacher in the Divine Spiritand then a complete, willing and believing submission of the whole man to this Infallible guidance! Happy is that man who, in the pride of intellect, determines not to be a guide to himselfand so to be guide to a fool! Happy is that man who, in the indolence of superstition, refuses to surrender himself up to be guided by his fellow man, call him priest, or pope, or minister, or what you willbut who, having found that God has sent His Son into this world of ours to be the Captain of salvation, who shall bring many sons into Glory, follows where his Commander leads the way!

Happy is the man, having seen this same Jesus appointed to be the Prophet of His people, delights to sit at His feet and receive of His words, reason, affection, contemplation and willfinding perfect rest in Him. He, with his eyes open, follows the All-Seeing One and, with his mind illuminated, becomes a disciple of the Eternal Light! It is clear that the most important thing, if we are agreed that we need a guide, is to examine the claims of those who aspire to the office. Some take a guide because, as I have said before, he is appointed by authorityhe happens to be the parson of the parish, or the family ministerand he is at once accepted without consideration.

He would be a very foolish person who would, in climbing the mountains of Switzerland, take a guide merely because he professed to be one and carried the usual certificates, if upon looking at him it was clear that the man was stone blind! Would you say that does not matter, he says he is appointed by authority? Would you go to the top of Mont Blanc with him? If so, he would soon conduct you into a crevasse and there would be an end to your folly! Yet multitudes resolve upon taking their religion by prescription, feeling confident that what is patronized by the great, and established and endowed by the nation, must, of course, be right!

Whether the guide can see or not seems to be a trifle. What matters is that he is properly ordained and duly inducted. If that is settled, the unthinking many ask no more. For my part, I like to look at my guides eyes. I like to know whether he has ever traversed the country and whether he has had experience of the way. If he cannot satisfy me on those points I look elsewhere, to one who has all sight and has had all experience, even the Lord Jesus! His authority I cannot question. I take for granted all that He teaches me. I am glad to be a seeing man following a seeing Leader, and I endeavor to be an intelligent scholar learning of a wise and sympathetic Teacher.

Our text has much wisdom about it as to this matter, for, first, it announces to us a great general principle, as a warning, namely, that a disciple does not get above his Master, but becomes like he is. Secondly, it gives a special application of the great general principle to Christ, that as we are perfected we shall become like He is, even as in the case of all other disciples who grow like their masters. After these points, I shall try to use the text for the encouragement of those who desire Christ as their Master, by saying that we may put the facts mentioned in the text to a practical test.

I. Let us take THE GREAT GENERAL PRINCIPLE as a warning. Several Truths of God are involved in the text, and these all illustrate the main point. It is evident that the disciple is generally drawn to the master who is most like himselfthe blind man is led by the blind. It is not merely that birds of a feather flock together and, therefore, men of kindred minds form association with each other, but there is about us all a natural tendency to admire our own image and to be willing to submit to any who are superior to us, and yet are of our type.

A teacher who does not shock our prejudices, but shows a sympathy with our tastes, we are at home with at once. The priest is like the people because the people are pleased to have him so. It is true of teachers as of idols, they that make them are like unto them. If the blind man could only see, he would not choose a blind man to be his guide. But as he cannot see, he meets with one who talks as blind men talk, who judges things as they are in the dark, and who does not know what sighted men know and, therefore, never reminds the blind man of his infirmity. And at once he says, This is my ideal of a man, he is exactly the leader I require! I will commit myself to him. So the blind man takes the blind man to be his guideand this is the reason why error has been so popular.

No error would live if it did not chime in with some evil propensity of human nature, if it did not gratify some error in man to which it is congruous. Idolatry is a prevailing sin because man is alienated from God who is a Spirit, and in his carnal folly demands a god whom his senses can apprehend. When you hear of crowds going over to Popery, do not wonder at it! Popery is the religion of depraved human nature put into shape by Satan and, therefore, it is no marvel that the nations are fascinated by it! What they love and what the god of this world sweetens to their tooth must go down with them. Popery and other forms of Sacramentarianism are a soft bed for idle limbs and as surely as a lazy man lies down, so surely does a superstitious man take to these systems.

Give a superstitious man the information contained in the Bible and a pair of scissors to cut his coat according to his shape, and Popery, in some shape or other, will be the religion which he will cut out for himself. Consequently it is popular. You cannot, at first, understand how the blind man who sets up for a guide could expect to find clients. Neither would he, only there are so many other blind people about who know nothing about his blindness and are sure to come to him! Mind you that you are not so blind, yourself, as to follow their example. Young man, mind who it is you choose for a guide. Your tendencies will be to select a wrong one, because your tendencies, themselves, are wrong. Pray that you may begin aright the journey of life, having Divine Grace infixed into your hearts, that you may choose the Christ of God who is the way, the truth, and

the life.

O Lord, let no soul here be so blind as to choose blind atheism, blind skepticism, or blind superstition to be his leader! You take the blind in the hand and lead them by a way that they know not and by paths which they have not seen. Do these things unto them, and do not forsake them! Having chosen his tutor, the student gradually becomes more and more like his master, or, having taken his guide, the tendency is to tread more closely in his footsteps and obey his rules more fully every day. We must be all conscious that we imitate those whom we admire. Love has a strange influence over our nature, to mold it into the form of our beloved.

A true disciple is like clay on the wheel and his master fashions him after his own image. We may be scarcely conscious of it, but we are most surely being conformed to the likeness of those to whose influence we submit ourselves. Whoever, then, your master may be, dear Friend, you are changing into his image. If you choose to be led by the votary of pleasure, you will become more and more frivolous. If you admire the slave of avarice, you will become avaricious. If you feel the sway of the minion of vice, you will, yourself, grow vicious. If a man who despises the Word of God becomes your hero, you will, before long, despise it, too. While you are gazing upon him with admiration, a kind of photography is going on, and you, like a sensitive plate, receive his image. I charge you, therefore, to be careful who becomes your guide.

And mark, the pupil does not go beyond the tutor, nor does the man who submits to be led go beyond his guide. Such a case is very rarely found. Indeed, I may say, never, for when the one who is led goes beyond his leader, he is not, in truth, led any longerrarely enough does it ever come to that. Men, if they outstrip their leaders, generally do so in the wrong direction. They seldom exaggerate their virtuesthose they frequently omitthey usually exaggerate peculiarities, follies, failings and faults. It is said that in the court of Richard III, because the king was roundshouldered, the courtiers gradually became humpbacked. And we have seen a whole country idiotic enough, not in the last century, but in this century, to have almost all its women limping because a popular princess was afflicted with a temporary lameness.

It is the way of mankind! They imitate each other as if by instinct. This is the only excuse I know of for Darwins theory of our having descended from the ape. Imitativeness is well developed in us, but if left to itself it works with a bias the wrong way, and the imitation is most forcible in the direction of deformity and defect. In music, painting, poetry and literature, men of a school seldom excel their master, or, if they do, they leave him. But the habit is to perpetrate the masters mannerisms and weaknesses. It is even more so in the art of living. Young men, in the task of choosing a master for your faith, I beseech you be careful to have none but the best, for you will not excel, but rather fall behind the master you follow. You are choosing a leaderchoose one who knows the roadfor if he has made some blunders you will make 10 times as many, and in all probability you will exaggerate each one of his mistakes.

The most solemn truth remains to be noted. When a man chooses a bad leader for his soul, at the end of all bad leadership there is a ditch. A man teaches error which he declares he has drawn from Scripture, and he backs it up with texts perverted and abused. If you follow that error and take its teacher for a leader, you may, for a time, be very pleased with yourself for knowing more than the poor plain people who keep to the good old way, but, mark my word, there is a ditch at the end of the error! You do not see it, yet, but there it is, and into it you will fall if you continue to follow your leader. At the end of error there is often a moral ditch and men go down, down, downthey scarcely know whytill presently, having imbibed doctrinal error, their moral principles are poisoned and like drunken men they find themselves rolling in the mire of sin.

At other times the ditch beyond a lesser error may be an altogether damnable doctrine. The first mistake was comparatively trifling, but, as it placed the mind on an inclined plane, the man descended almost as a matter of course, and almost before he knew it, found himself given over to a strong delusion to believe a lie. The blind man and his guide, whatever else they miss, will be sure to find the ditchthey need no sight to obtain an entrance into that! Alas, to fall into the ditch is easy, but how shall they be recovered? I would earnestly entreat, especially professing Christians, when novelties of doctrine come up, to be very cautious how they give heed to them. I bid you remember the ditch!

A small turn of the switch on the railway is the means of taking the train to the far east or to the far west. The first turn is very little, indeed, but the points arrived at are remote. There are new errors which have lately come up which your fathers knew not, with which some are mightily busy! And I have noticed when men have fallen into them, their usefulness ceased. I have seen ministers go only a little way in speculative theories and gradually glide from latitudinarianism into Socinianism or Atheism. Into these ditches thousands fall.

Others are precipitated into an equally horrible pit, namely, the holding nominally of all the doctrines in theory and none of them in fact. Men hold truths nowadays with the heart taken out of then, and the very life and meaning torn away. There are members and ministers of evangelical denominations who do not believe evangelical doctrine, or if they do believe it, they attach but little importance to it! Their sermons are essays on philosophy tinged with the Gospel. They put a quarter of a grain of Gospel into an Atlantic of talkand poor souls are drenched with words to no profit. God save us from ever leaving the old Gospel, or losing its spirit and the solid comfort which it brings!

Yet into the ditch of lifeless profession and philosophic dreaming we may soon fall if we commit ourselves to wrong readerships. All this should prevent us, as I think, from taking any man whatever as our leader, for if we trust to any mere man, though he may be right in 99 of the hundred, he is wrong, somewhere, and our tendency will be to be more influenced by his one wrong point than by any of his right ones. Depend upon it, in matters of religion, that ancient malediction is abundantly verified, Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.

There one whom you may follow implicitly, and one only! There is one whom you may trust without reserve and only onethe Man, Christ Jesus, the Son of God! But if you do not wish to be led into errors of heart and practice, beware of men, and follow none but Jesus! Follow no footprints but the footprints of that flock which follows at His heel. You will do best not even to follow the sheep, but to follow the Shepherd, only, and to do that even if you walk alone! May the Holy Spirit be given you to lead you into all truth. Thus much upon the great principlelet it act as a warning.

II. ITS SPECIAL APPLICATION TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST is our encouragement! If we have the Lord Jesus Christ as our Leader we certainly cannot go beyond our Leader, but we shall be privileged to grow more and more like He and we shall be perfected, according to our text, as our Leader is. First, this is what we might have expected. We see ordinarily, as we have said, that the disciple grows like his Master, but with such a Master the process becomes more sure!

With such a Master, of whom these lips cannot speak well enough, a Master the laces of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose, it may well come to pass that we are melted down with love and poured out into the mold of obedience. He is the Creator, can He not create in us His image? From such an One as He is, we confidently expect it. For, observe, the teaching, itself, is such that it must have power over hearts that yield to it. His doctrine is almighty Loveall His teaching is Divine and yet so broken down to human capacity that it exactly suits the man who has taken the yoke of Christ upon him and determined to learn of Him!

Other masters teach us crooked and doubtful lessons. And when learned, too often the best wisdom is to unlearn them. But with our Lord, the teaching is most sure, most heavenly, most potentand we feel within ourselves that it is so true, so noble, so grandthat it comes to us with authority and not as the word of man. If I knew only what Jesus teaches, I would conclude that a teacher who gives forth such doctrines and such precepts must influence His disciples. But it is not in His teaching, alone, that His influence lies. The most potent charm is

Himself. When He spoke here below they said, Never man spoke like this Man, and the reason was because, never man lived like this Man.

His Word was with power, but then He, Himself was THE WORD. If you view the precepts of Christ as embodied in His life, they glow with beauty and flash with power. You can bear from such a Teacher what you could not have endured from anybody else, for His Character gives Him a right to speak. Many of His precepts would have seemed perfectly preposterous had they first fallen from the lips of fallible men, for their hearers would have cried out, Physician, heal yourself. Coming from Him, they come naturally as good fruit from a good treethey are the necessary fruit of such a Nature and such a life. Who can help being persuaded when the arguments live before our eyes? We are overpowered by the grandeur of the Redeemers goodness, by the splendor of His love, the infinity of His self-sacrifice!

Jesus commands our faith by the revelation of Himself and by that same revelation He conforms us to Himself. Was ever such a life as His? Was ever such a death? Was ever such an altogether lovely Person as His? Was ever such perfection as His? In life He was so outspoken and yet so gentle, so courageous and yet so kind, so unflinching and yet so tender, wearing His heart upon His sleeve in the transparency of truth, but prudent and guarding Himself with Infallible Wisdom! He was a match for all, however they might assail Him, and yet apparently never on His guard at all, but as a child among them, the Holy Child Jesus. Oh, if you sit at Jesus feet you will not only learn of Him and His teaching will have power over you, but you will learn Him, for He, Himself, is His own best lesson!

Never did eyes look up into those dear eyes of Jesus, which are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, washed with milk and fitly set, but they were, themselves, cleansed and purified till they became like the fish pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Beth-rabbim. Who could bear the Lord Jesus on his heart, like a cluster of myrrh, and not be perfumed by His Presence? Who could be with Him and not be like He is? We feel quite sure that the disciples will grow like their Master in the case of Jesus because He inspires them with an intense love to Himself which flames forth in enthusiasm for Him! Get a teacher whom all the scholars love and admire, and they will soon learn. Make them enthusiastic for him, and no lesson will be too hard. This, our dear and blessed Lord, of whom these lips cannot speak as they should, has done.

We admire, we love, no, we adore Him! He is our God, our All in All, and therefore we desire to be molded at His will. Live for Him? Yes, we find it to be our joy, for the love of Christ empowers us! Die for Him? Yes, His saints in all ages have rejoiced to lay down their lives for Him. Full of fervor and fired with enthusiasm, they have suffered losses and reproaches for His names sake. If the Teacher inspires such enthusiasm, doubtless He will fashion the disciples in His likeness. Best of all, our Great Teacher has a Spirit with Him, a mighty Spirit, God, Himself, the Holy Spirit! And when He teaches, He teaches not with words alone, but with a power which goes beyond the ear into the heart itself!

Other teachers, except as they follow Christ, must depend upon the charms of eloquence, or the force of argument. But our Lord, though most eloquent of all, for His lips are like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh though full of arguments, for His is the Wisdom of Godrelies upon the energy which He felt when He said, the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for the Lord has anointed Me. The Divine Spirit casts a light into the soul of such a brilliance that things not seen stand out in clearest evidence! And things hoped for are grasped in their very substance! With that Light there comes, also, Life to feel, power to realize and discernment to judge. And so the soul is led into all Truth and the scholar receives the lessons of his lord in their life and energy.

Who else can give this Spirit? By what other teacher can the Holy Spirit be breathed into us? Who would not sit at the feet of a Master so transcendently above all others in possessing such an infinite gift? I would to God, while I am speaking thus, that some here present would say, Gladly would I commit myself to that great Teacher. Remember, Beloved, if you

want Him to be your Master, He equally longs for you to be His disciple! I think I have now shown that it was to be expected that with such a Master, disciples should become like He is.

Now let me observe that this was virtually promised. It is promised to us, in effect, in the great decree of predestination, for whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. This is the great purpose of God, that Christ may be the First-Born among many Brethren, and that the Brethren may be a company in whose faces the Lord shall discern the image of the Only Begotten. What God predestinates we may confidently expect. It is promised to us in the very name of Jesus Christ, for that name is Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.

But saving men from their sins is the bringing of them back into a condition of purity and holiness. This, indeed, is the salvation which we preachnot the mere forgiveness of sin, as some thinkbut the conquering of sin, the driving out of sin, the making of men like the Lord Jesus by the Spirit of God! The very name of Jesus tells us that He means to make His disciples as free from sin as He is. We know, also, that this was our Lords objective, for the design of Christs life is clearly seen in His last prayer when He prayed, Sanctify them through Your truth; Your word is truth. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they, also, might be sanctified through the truth.

You can see that His one objective is to make His people holy, as He is holy, to keep them from evil even as He was kept, and to make them conquerors over sin even as He conquered. All His life He labored at this with the 12 and with others who followed with Him and His last prayer breathes this, I pray not that You should take them out of the World, but that You should keep them from the Evil One. Everywhere this is seen to be true. The relationships which He assumes suppose it, for brethren are like their brother, and friends are like their friend. The metaphors which He uses imply the same thing, for the engrafted branch drinks in the nature of the stem, the spouse grows like her husband and the members of the body are of the same nature as the head.

The mystical Christ it not like the image of the Babylonian monarchs dream with head of gold, and feet of clay, but Christ is one throughout. The Grace which dwells in the Head, transforms the whole body. It is our delightful expectation that we shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is, and then we shall be satisfied, for we shall wake up in His likeness.

Well, Brothers and Sisters, what we might have expected, and what God has thus virtually promised, has been actually seen, for the disciples have been like their Lord, and this is where I want to lay the most stress. Have not the disciples been like their Lord in points of character? It would be very absurd for me to say that the Old Testament saints were disciples of Christ in a literal sense, and yet in spirit they all were not, for the Gospel is the same in all ages, and it is the same light which lightens every man that comes into the world. The inner teaching of the Spirit was the same to Abel and to Noah as it was to John and Paul. And while Apostles looked back to Jesus and were enlightened, Patriarchs looked forward and had light, too.

Now each of the saints in the olden time had some likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of a few of them and you will see some of His beauties. Abel reveals His righteousness and Enoch His walking with God. Job shows His patience and Abraham His faith. Moses His meekness and Samuel His power of intercession. Daniel is like He in His integrity and Jeremiah in His weeping. Like drops of morning dew, all these reflected the light of the Sun of Righteousness. In the New Testament we see the transforming power of His teaching in many instances. Peter and John were like their Master, for we read that when their enemies saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. The likeness was so striking that they were obliged to confess it!

Take John alone, for a minute, and who can read his Epistles without saying, Even thus his Master spoke? John was far behind his Lord, but yet how marvelously like He! You have smiled at your children, sometimes, when you have seen your own ways repeated in them. You have beheld your own peculiarities as in a mirror! Almost unconsciously they have been yourself in miniature. So was it evidently with John. If it is true, as tradition says, that he was carried into the assembly when he was too old to walk, and was in the habit of saying to them, Little children, love one another: little children, love one anotherit was so like our Lord Jesus Christ, you might have thought the Master had returned to earth!

As for Paul, in many aspects he is the counterpart of his Lord, and as I read that strange passage in Romans which staggers some, where he says, I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, according to the flesh, I am led to say, Herein he resembles that Blessed One who was actually made a curse for us, as it is written, cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree. Now, all the saints of God, more or less, according as they have fully been disciples of Jesus, display His characteristics. I cannot stop, this morning, to tell you what characteristics I see in you which are like my Lord. I rejoice that I do know Brothers and Sisters here of whom I have often said to myself, I can see their Master in them. I wish I could say so of

all of you, but still, I am glad to see in so many the points of true likeness to Jesus, the family characteristics which mark all the children of God.

There are little touches of their Father in all the heirs of salvation which make us feel that they belong to the same family as Jesus. They could not have learned those waysthey must have been imparted by a birth from above. It is a very noteworthy thing that those who are disciples of Christ, each become like He as to their life story. Going back to the old saints as being really disciples of the doctrine of the Redeemer, there is Melchizedek bringing forth bread and wine to refresh Abrahamwould you not have thought it was Christ Himself? There is Isaac gently submitting to his father while he draws the knife to slay himcould you not have said that it was Jesus? There is Joseph making himself known to his brethren and ruling all Egypt for their goodmight we not have thought that it was

our Lord come on earth before His time to bless His chosen ones?

Yonder is David coming back with Goliaths head, while all the maidens of Israel rejoice around himcould you not have thought it was our Master returning from Edom with dyed garments from Bosra? The saints are types of Him because they are of the same type as He is. As for the disciples after Christ came, you will often find them in positions which set forth Jesus Christ most evidently. See Stephen boldly declaring the Gospel until his enemies stone him. Have you not read of his Master many times, They would have stoned Him, but He conveyed himself out of their sight? Look at Paul at Lystra. They are about to sacrifice to himit makes you think of days when the crowd cried, Hosanna, Hosanna. Lo, the Apostle rebukes the throng, and now are they stoning himand it recalls to your memory the time when the crowd shouted, Crucify Him, crucify Him! Away with such a Fellow from the earth.

Read the story of Paul in the shipwreck, when he says to the captain of the ship, and to the officer of the troops, Be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any mans life among you. You might almost have thought it was the Savior, Himself, saying to the winds and waves, Peace, be still. Indeed, Christ is in all His members! His life is written out again in their lives. Beloved, I could mention many saints of modern times in whose lives we may see Jesus. That poor woman who dropped into the treasury her two mites, which were all her livingis she not very much like Jesus who gave up all for us, and became poor that we, through His poverty, might be rich?

Others are like the woman who broke the alabaster box of precious ointment, to give their best things to her Lord. Do they not remind you of the lover of our souls, who broke the precious alabaster box of His body and filled all earth and Heaven with the perfume? Everyone who gives up self for Gods Glory is Jesus in miniature! Look at John Howard going about among the dungeons of Europe, spying out poor prisoners to do them good. Is not that Christ all over again, with glad tidings for the captives? Or John Williams landing at Erromanga with his life in his hands, to convert cannibalswas not that laying down his life for the sheep?

Now, dear Friends do you think if we had your life before us we could make out anything like Jesus Christ in it? If you are His disciple it will be so. There will it be in your biography as your children will read itfor they will read it better than anybody else. There it will be as your wife will read it and as those you work with will read itsomething which looks as if it were extracted from the life of Jesus. Students in Christs College must be like their Tutor, and they are! I dare say the Brother is present, here, of whom I am about to speak. And if so, he will be sorry to hear me tell the story and would stop my mouth if he could!

I will, however, make bold to go on. I know a house painter who was working with other men over the top of the Great Northern Railway, at a great height. One of his fellow workmen had been drinking very heavily and was unsteady on the lofty scaffold. He said to himself, That man will never get down alive, and rather than he should perish, he actually offered to carry him down on his back. I believe it would have been death to them both if the attempt had been made, but he cheerfully offered. He said, My soul is safe. I am a Christian. I am afraid you will be killed and, if you are, your soul will be lost. I will carry you down if you will only keep quiet.

The man rejected the kind offer, though persuaded again and again, and alas, in trying to descend he fell into the middle of the railway, from a dreadful height, and was taken up dead. When I heard of my good Brother, a humble member of this Church, doing that, I thought, There is our Master, revealed in His disciple! Our life is a painting, and if we are in Christs Studio, there will be traces of His hand, and men will exclaim, That was no common Painter! That stroke, that line, is just the line that the great Master used to make! I am sure He has put in those touches. O Brothers and Sisters, we need none of us wish to be originalslet us plagiarize Christand that will be the grandest original! God help us in this.

Now I was going to say, but time has fled, that Christs disciples grow like He in their struggles and in their temptations. They are met by Satan as Christ was. They are tried by the world as Christ was. They are assailed by Sadducee unbelief and Pharisaic superstition as Christ was. They have to go through the same fight and, blessed be God, they win the same victories! Christs disciples overcome sin. By their Masters help they rise above doubt, they vanquish the world and they stand in purity and faith. By-and-by they shall be like He in their rewards. To him that overcomes, He says, I will give to sit upon My throne, even as I have overcome and have sat down with My Father upon His throne.

It is a beautiful subject! I wish I had the power to work it out, the way in which the disciple of Jesus thus, by sure steps, becomes perfected into the image of Christ, till the likeness is so near and so close that even the clear eyes of this wicked world in the dim atmosphere of its ignorance cannot help seeing that the man is like the Master!

III. Now, lastly, we will dwell for two or three minutes upon this encouraging fact, that WE MAY PUT ALL THIS TO THE TEST this morning if we will. Brothers and Sisters, if you are not disciples of Jesus Christ, remember, He will receive you! He will receive you though you have been to other masters and learned a great deal under them, all of which you will have to unlearn. It is a very easy thing to take a man and teach him if his mind is clear and clean. But you have learned a great deal that you will have to forget.

O you of 40, 50, or 60, what a world of mischief there is in you that will have to come out! Well, my Master will take you for pupils, though you have been with other masters all this while. And, though you do not know even the rudiments of what He is going to teach, He will take you. My Lord Jesus keeps an A B C schoolHe begins with the infants. What a mercy it is that He takes such poor, stupid heads as ours, who know nothing except what we ought not to know! And I will add, if you have but very little capacity, or none at all, it does not matter

*He takes the fool, and makes him know   
The wonders of His dying love.*

Not many great men, not many mighty are chosen, but God has chosen the poor of this world, and things that are not, and things that are despised, yes, and weak things and foolish things, has God chosen. Come to Him, for if you are incapable, He is not, and His capacity will soon overcome your incapacity. You say, I cannot learn. Ah, but you do not know how well He can teach, for He can teach so well that even those who think they cannot learn are soon instructed in His school!

Stand not back, dear Friend, because you cannot pay the fee, for my Masters is a free school! He takes nothing from us, but He gives everything to us. The only admission ticket that you need is simply to be willing to be taught, to be conscious that you need teaching and guiding, and to submit yourself to His guidance and instruction. Are you willing to do so? Oh, you say, I shall grieve Him till He gives me up. Well, I have often thought so. I do not wonder that you are troubled with that thoughtit has often come across me when I see what little progress I have made after being so many years in His school.

If I had a human master, he would have been out of patience with me long ago. But the Lord Jesus Christ never gives up a scholarhaving once commenced to teach, He continues His Divine lessons till they are fully learnedand the more difficult it is for Him to teach, the more honor it will be when He gets all His scholars educated for the skies! He will not allow a defeat in this matterHe will overcome ignorance, sin, hardness of heart, infirmity and incapacity till He shall have instructed us in the lore of Heaven and made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

Come, dear Brothers and Sisters, you that are scholars of Christ, let us sit at His feet! Let us follow in His ways more closely than ever! And you, dear Friends, who as yet are not in His school, He says to you, Who is simple let him turn in here. As for him that needs understanding let him eat of My bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled. May the good Lord incline your hearts to learn of Him, for Christs sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONLuke 6:20-40.** HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK852, 262, 705.  
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ON LAYING FOUNDATIONS   
NO. 1702

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 21, 1883, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings, and does them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man which built a house, and dug deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood   
arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that hears, and does not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.   
Luke 6:46-49.**

THESE parables describe two classes of hearers, but they say nothing of those who are not hearers. Their position and prospects we must infer from what is said of hearers. Our Lord Jesus Christ has come into the world to tell us of the Fathers love. And never man spoke as He spoke and yet there are many who refuse to hear Him. I do not mean those who are far away, to whom the name of Jesus is well-near unknown, but I mean persons in this land and especially in this great and highly-favored city who willfully refuse to hear Him whom God has anointed to bring tidings of salvation! Our Lord Jesus is proclaimed, I was about to say, upon the housetops in this city, for even in their music halls and theaters, Christ is preached to the multitude! And at the corners of our streets His banner is lifted upand yet there are tens of thousands to whom the preaching of the Gospel is as music in the ears of a corpse!

They shut their ears and will not hear, though the testimony is concerning Gods own Son, eternal life and the way to escape from everlasting wrath! To their own best interests, to their eternal benefit, men are dead nothing will secure their attention to their God. To what, then, are these men like? They may fitly be compared to the man who built no house whatever and remained homeless by day and without shelters by night. When worldly trouble comes like a storm, those persons who will not hear the Words of Jesus have no consolation to cheer them. When sickness comes, they have no joy of heart to sustain them under its pains. And when death, that most terrible of storms, beats upon them, they feel its full fury, but they cannot find a hiding place.

They neglect the housing of their souls and when the hurricane of Almighty Wrath shall break forth in the world to come they will have no place of refuge. In vain will they call upon the rocks to fall upon them and the mountains to cover them! They shall be, in that day, without a shelter from the righteous wrath of the Most High. Alas, that any being who wears the image of man should be found in such a plight! Homeless wanderers in the day of tempest! How my soul grieves for them! Yet, what excuse will those men invent who have refused, even, to know the way of salvation? What excuse can the most tender heart make for them?

Will they plead that they could not believe? Yet they may not say that they could not hearand faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God! Oh my Friend, if the Word of God comes to you and you decline to hear it and, therefore, do not believe in Jesus, but die in your sinswhat is this but soul-suicide? If a man dies of a disease when infallible medicine is to be had, must not his death lie at his own door? If a man perishes of hunger when bread is all around him and others feed to the full, but he will not have it, will any man pity him? Surely not a drop of pity will be yielded to a lost soul with which he may relieve the torment of his conscience, for all holy intelligences will perceive that the sinner chose his own destruction!

This shall ever press upon the condemned conscience, You knew the Gospel, but you did not attend to it: you knew that there was salvation and that Christ was the Savior, and that pardon was proclaimed to guilty men, but you would not afford time from your farm and from your merchandise, from your pleasures and from your sins, to learn how you could be saved. That which cost God so dearly, you treated as a trifle. Ah, my dear Friends, may none of you belong to the non-hearing class!

It is not to such that I shall, this morning, address myself, and yet I could not enter upon my discourse without a word of loving expostulation with them. Let me part with them by quoting the warning Words of the Holy Spirit, See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaks from Heaven. Our earnest attention will now be given to those who are hearers of the Word of God and are somewhat affected by it. All hearers are builders of houses for their soulsthey are, each one, doing something to set up a spiritual habitation.

Some of these go a considerable distance in this house-building and even crown the structure by publicly confessing Christ. They say unto Him, Lord, Lord! They meet with His followers and join with them in reverence to the Masters name, but they do not obey the Lord. They hear Him, but they fail to do the things which He says. Therefore they are mistaken builders, who fail in the foundation, and make nothing sure except that their house will come down about their ears! Others there are, and we trust they will be found to be many among us, who are building rightly, building for eternityconstructing a dwelling place with a foundation of rock and walls of well-built stoneof which the Lord Christ is both Foundation and Cornerstone.

I am anxious to speak, at this time, to those who are just beginning to build for eternity. I am indeed happy to know that there are many such among us. May the Holy Spirit bless this sermon to them!

I. Our first subject will be A COMMON TEMPTATION WITH SPIRITUAL BUILDERS. A common temptation with hearers of the Word of God, according to the two parables before us, is to neglect foundation workto get hurriedly over the first part of the businessand run up the building quickly. They are tempted to assume that all is done which is said to be doneto take it for granted that all is right which is hoped to be right and then to go on piling up the walls as rapidly as possible. The great temptation, I say, with young beginners in religious life, is to skimp on the foundation and treat those things lightly which are of the first importance.

The same temptation comes to us throughout the whole of life, but to young beginners it is especially perilous. Satan would have them neglect the fundamental principles upon which their future hope and character are to rest, so that in a future trying hour, from need of a solid foundation, they may yield to evil and lose the whole of their life building. This temptation is all the more dangerous, first, because these young beginners have no experience. Even the most experienced child of God is often deceivedhow much more the pilgrim who has but just entered the wicket gate! The tried saint sometimes mistakes that for a virtue which is only a gilded fault and he fancies that to be genuine which is mere counterfeit! How, then, without any experience, whatever, can the mere babe in Grace escape deception unless he is graciously preserved?

Newly awakened and rendered serious, earnest hearts get to work in the Divine life with much hurry, seizing upon that which first comes to hand, building in heedless haste, without due care and examination. Something must be done and they do it without asking whether it is according to the teaching of the Lord. They call Jesus, Lord, but they do what others say, rather than what Jesus says. Satan is sure to be at hand at such times that he may lead the young convert to lay, in place of Gospel repentance, a repentance that needs to be repented ofand instead of the faith of Gods electa proud presumption or an idle dream. For that love of God which is the work of the Spirit of God, he brings mere natural affection for a minister and he says, There, that will do! You must have a house for your soul to dwell in. There are the materials, pile them up.

Like children at play upon the beach, the anxious heap up their sandcastles and please themselves with them, for they are ignorant of Satans devices. I am, for this reason, doubly anxious to save my beloved young friends from the Deceiver! The common temptation is, instead of really repenting, to talk about repentance. Instead of heartily believing, to say, I believe, without believing. Instead of truly loving, to talk of love, without loving! Instead of coming to Christ, to speak about coming to Christ, and profess to come to Christ, and yet not to come at all! The character of Talkative in Pilgrims Progress is ably drawn. I have met the gentleman many times and can bear witness that John Bunyan was a photographer before photography was invented!

Christian said of him He talks of prayer, of repentance, of faith and of the new birth, but he knows but only to talk of them. I have been in his family and his house is as empty of religion as the white of an egg is of savor. We have too many such persons around us who are, as to what they say, everything that is to be desired and yet they are proven to be mere shams. As tradesmen place dummies in their shops, papered and labeled to look like goods, while yet they are nothing of the sort, so are these men marked and labeled as Christians, but the Grace of God is not in them! Oh that you young beginners may be on the alert, that you be not content with the form of godliness, but are made to feel the power of it!

There is this to help the temptation, too, that this plan for the present saves a great deal of trouble. Your mind is distressed and you need comfortwell, it will comfort you to say, Lord, Lord, though you do not the things that Christ says. If you admit the claims of Jesus to be Lord, even though you do not believe on Him for salvation and so neglect the main thing which He commands, you will find some ease in the admission. He bids you repent of sin, trust His blood, love His Word and seek after holinessbut it is much easier to admire these things without following after them in your life. To feign repentance and faith is not difficult, but genuine godliness is heart work and requires thought, care, sincerity, prayerfulness and watchfulness.

Believe me, real religion is no sport! He that would be saved will find it to be no jesting matter. The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and he that is easy about the thing, and thinks it is nothing more than the magicians, Heigh, presto, done, has made a fatal mistake! Strive, says Christ, to enter into the strait gate. The Spirit strives in us mightily and often works us to an agony. The crown of eternal Glory is not won without fighting, nor the prize of our high calling received without runningyet, by just making a holy profession, and by practicing an outward forma man imagines that the same result is produced as by seeking the Lord with his whole heart and believing in the Lord Jesus. If it were so, there would be a fine broad road to Heaven and Satan, himself, would turn pilgrim! Believe me, dear Hearers, this saving of trouble will turn out to be a

making of trouble and, before matters end, the hardest way will turn out to be the easiest way!

This kind of building without a foundation has this advantage to back up the temptationit enables a man to run up a religion very quickly. He makes splendid progress! While the anxious heart is searching after the Truth of God in the inward parts and begging to be renewed by Grace, his exulting friend is as happy as he can be in a peace which he has suddenly obtained without question or examination. This rapid grower never asks, Has my religion changed my conduct? Is my faith attended by a new nature? Does the Spirit of God dwell in me? Am I really what I profess to be, or am I but a bastard professor, after all? No, he puts aside all enquiry as a temptation of the devil! He takes every good thing for granted and votes that all is gold which glitters!

Look how fast he goes! The fog is dense, but he steams through it, heedless of danger! He has joined the Churchhe has commenced work for God! He is boasting of his own attainmentshe hints that he is perfect! But is this mushroom building safe? Will it pass muster in the last, great survey? Will it stand should a tempest happen? The chimney shaft is tall, but is it safe? Yes, theres the rub! This is the question which makes an end of much of the boasting which is all around us. It is better to tremble at Gods Word than boldly to presume. It is better to be fearful, lest, after all, we may be castaways, than to harden ones forehead with vain confidence. When a man travels upon a wrong road, the faster he runs, the further he will go astray.

Remember the advice to go slowly and the old proverb which says, The more haste the less speed. If you build quickly because you build without a foundation, your time and toil are thrown away. How common, how deceptive is this temptation! The young beginner, the man who is just awakened to seek the Lord, will find a great many to help him in his mistake, should he neglect the foundation. Kind, good, Christian friends often, without a thought of doing so, help to mislead seeking souls. Yes, they say, you are converted, and so, perhaps, the person would be if all he said were true! But it is said without feeling; it comes from the lips, only, and does not come from the heart! And, therefore, it is ruinous to encourage him. A kindly assurance from a Christian friend may breed false confidence if that assurance was mistakenly given.

In these days, we do not meet with many Christians who err by dealing too severely with convertsthe shot strikes the other target. Our forefathers were possibly too suspicious and jealous, but nowadays we nearly all err in the opposite directionwe are so anxious to see everybody brought to Christ that our wish may tend to delude us into the belief that it is so. We are so willing to cheer and comfort those who seek the Lord, that we may fall into the habit of prophesying smooth things and thus shun everything which tends to probe and test, lest it should also discourage. Let us beware lest we cry, Peace, peace, where there is no peace! It will be a sad thing to breed hypocrites when we were looking for converts.

I have heard of one who had been into the Enquiry Room a dozen times and when, on another occasion, she was invited to go there, she said, I really do not know why I should go, for I have been told that I was saved 12 times, already, and I am not a bit better than before they told me so. It would be better to send some home weeping rather than rejoicing! Many a wound needs the knife more than the plaster. You may be comforted by well-meant assurances of tender friends and yet that comfort may be all a lie! I therefore warn you against any peace except that which comes from doing that which Jesus commands, or, in other words, against any confidence except that which rests in only Jesus and is attended with repentance, faith and a life of obedience to your Lord.

No doubt man are encouraged in slight building by the fact that so many professors are making a fair show and yet their building is without foundation. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that in all Churches there are persons who have no depth of spiritual root and, we are afraid, no real spiritual life. We cannot root them up, though we fear that they are tares, for we are assured that we would unavoidably root up the wheat with themand this our Master forbids. There is nothing about their outward conduct which we could lay hold upon as a proof of their being deceivers, and yet a cold chill runs through us when we talk with them, for they have no warmth, no life and nothing of the Lord about them.

We miss in their conversation that sweet spirituality, that holy unction, that blessed humility which are sure to be present when men are truly familiar with the Lord and have entered into living union with Him. People of this order mix up with us in our holy convocationsand when they come across the newly-awakened onesthey talk of Divine things in such an off-hand and flippant manner that they do serious mischief. They speak about conversion as if it were a mere trifle, a matter as easy as kissing your handand those who are hopeful, and over whom our hearts are yearningare turned aside by them. Young people are apt to think, So-and-So is a member of the Church and he is never very precise. If a lukewarm profession satisfies him, why should it not satisfy me!

Ah, my dear Friends, you would not say so in business! If you knew a man was trading without capital and likely to come to bankruptcy, you would not say, I may do the same. If you saw a man venturing into deep water who could not swim, and you felt sure that he would ultimately drown, you would not follow his example and drown, too. No, no! Do not let these frothy professors be beacons to you. Get away from Mr. Talkative, lest he make you as hollow a drum as he is! Beware of loose professors who are as wreckers lights that lure men upon the rocks. Make sure work for eternity and bid triflers be gone.

Again, there is always, at the back of all this, an inducement to build without a foundation because it will not be known and possibly may not be found out for years. Foundation work is quite out of sightand the house can be built up and be very useful in a great many waysand it may stand a good while without the underground work, for houses without foundations do not tumble down at oncethey will stand for years. Nobody knows how long they may stay up. Perhaps they may even be inhabited with comfort till the last great flood. Death, alone, will discover some impostors. Therefore, because the ill-founded house will do for the presentand can be used and may bring immediate comfortmany people consider it economical to leave out the foundation as a needless superfluity.

If they are questioned as to their vital godliness, they grow angry What business have you to enter into my private business? Why should you meddle with the secrets of my soul? Ah, dear Friend, if we were cruel to you and wished you to be deceived, we would hold our tongues, or speak to you with the voice of flattery! But as we love you and as we hope to be blessed, in years to come, through your true and holy consecration to Christ, we are intensely earnest that you should begin aright. We would have you build that which will not need to be pulled down, againwork that will stand when the waters are out and the stream beats vehemently upon it! I dread that any man should perish without religion, but I dread far more that any man should perish with it, finding his faith to have been false, after all!

If you build, build what is worth building! If you must be builders for your souls, and surely you must, or else be shelterless, then take heed on what foundation you build and be careful what you build, lest, after all, you suffer the loss of all your labor in that last tremendous day! How sad it will seem to dwell near the gates of Heavenand spend your lives among those who are to be its future inhabitantsand then for lack of sincerity and truth, to be shut out of the Celestial City! How terrible to find out by experience that there is a back way to the gates of Hell even from the gates of Heaven! God grant it be not so with one of us here present.

O you builders, care not merely for the present, but build for death, judgment and eternity! This part of our discourse is not only for young people, but for us allfor old as well as young. Depend upon it, there is not one man among us but what has need to search himself and see whether the foundation of his faith has been truly laid or not.

II. So I advance to the second step, where we will considerA WISE PRECAUTION WHICH SAFE BUILDERS NEVER FORGET. They dig deep and never rest till they have a good substantial foundationthey are glad to get to the bottom of all the loose earth and to build on the rock. Let me commend this wise precaution to all of you. Follow the text and learn to see to your sincerity. The Lord Jesus says, Why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? May the Holy Spirit make you true to the core. Be afraid to say a word more than you feel. Never permit yourself to speak as if you had an experience of which you have only read. Let not your outward worship go a step beyond the inward emotion of your soul. If Christ is truly your Lord, you will obey Himif He is not your Lord, do not call Him so.

It is a great point in all your religious thoughts, beliefs, words and acts to have the heart moving in all. It is an awful thing to make a high profession of sanctity and yet live in the indulgence of secret vice. Such persons will listen to my observation and commend me for my faithfulness and yet continue in their hypocrisy! This is most painful. These men can speak the Jews language and yet the tongue of Babylon is more natural to themthey follow Christ, but their hearts are with Belial. Ah, me! My soul is sick at the thought of them. Be true! Be true! If truth will carry you no further than despair, better that you stop in despair than gain a hope by a lie! Do not live on fiction, profession, presumption. Eat that which is good and feed only upon the Truth of God. Remember that when you build with wood, hay and stubble of mere notion, you are only gathering materials for your own funeral pile in that day when the fire shall devour all lovers and makers of a lie. Be true as steel! Every wise builder for his soul must mind that.

The next thing is thoroughness. For observe, according to our Lord, the wise builder dug deep. You cannot do a right thing too well. Dig deep if you dig a foundation. If it is repentance, let it be an intensely earnest repentance, including a vehement hatred of every form of sin. If you make confession before God, confess with your very soul and not only with your lipslay bare your spirit before the glance of Deity. If it is faith that you talk of, believe right up to the hilt. Do not go in for that kind of skeptical believing which is so common, nowadays. If you believe, believe! If you repent, repent! In the purging of the soul, there is nothing like sweeping out every particle of the old leaven of falsehood. And in bringing in the good things into the heart, there is nothing like bringing in everything that Christ prescribesso that of His fullness we may receive not only Grace, but Grace for Grace, Grace upon Grace, all the Grace that is needed!

Be downright in everything. The wise builder dug through the earth and continued his digging till he reached rock. And then he dug into the rock and struck out a trench in which he might lay his foundation, for he could not be content unless he made sure and thorough work of it. Sincerity and thoroughness are fine building materials! Next to that add selfrenunciation, for that is in the parable. When a man digs a deep foundation, he has much earth to throw out. So he that builds for eternity has a great deal to get rid of. Self-trust must go at the beginning! Love of sin must followworldliness, pride, self-seeking, all sorts of iniquitythese must be cast aside. There is very much rubbish and the rubbish must go! You cannot make sure work for eternity without clearing away much which flesh and blood would like to retain. See to this and count the cost.

Then must come solid principle. The man who is determined that if he does build, he will build securely, digs down to the rock. He says, I believe in God, He is my Helper. I believe in Christ Jesus and on His atoning sacrifice and living intercession I build my eternal hopes. I also build on the Doctrine of Grace, for the Lord has said itBy Grace are you saved, through faith. I build on Scripturenothing but the warrant of the Word of God will do for me. What God has said is a rockwhat man teaches is mere shifting sand! What a blessed thing it is to get down to the eternal principles of Divine Truth! You that pick up your religion from your mothers and fathersyou that follow it because it happened to be in the familywhat are you worth in the day of trouble? You are blown down like a booth, or a hut of twigs!

But you that know what you believe and why you believe ityou who, when you put your foot down, know what you are standing upon and are persuaded that you have firm rock beneath youyou are the men and women who will stand fast when mere pretenders are burled out of their place! Oh, my dear seeking Friends, fix upon true principles and be not content with lies! These truthful principles must be firmly adhered to. Bind your building to the rock. A house will not stand merely because it is on the rockyou must get its foundation into the rock. The house must take a grip of the rock and the rock must grasp the house. The more you can get the house to be a bit of the rock and the rock, as it were, to grow up into the house, the more secure you are.

It is of no use saying, Yes, I confide in Christ, in Grace, in Revelation, unless your very life enters into these things and they enter into you! Hypocrites, Job says, are stolen away in the night. They are easily removed. The inventor of some new notion comes along, cracks up his novel wares, and silly souls are at once taken in by him. Christ may go, Grace may go and the Bible may go, tootheir new master has them wholly in his power. We do not need such unsubstantial men! We care not for these speculating builders whose carcasses are all around us! We have had enough of castles in the airwe need true men who will stand fast like the mountainswhile errors, like clouds, blow over them! Remember the huge shaft at Bradford and how many were slain by its fall? Let it teach you to hold hard to foundation Truths of God and never depart from them.

The man in the second parable did not build as he should. What may I say of him? I will say three words. First, he was a man who had nothing out of sightyou could see all his house when you looked at it. If you can see all a mans religion at a glance, he has no religion worth having! Godliness lies most in secret prayer, private devotion and inward Grace. The wise builder had the most costly part of his house buried in the ground, but the other man showed all that he had above ground. He is a poor tradesman who has no stock but that which he puts into the window. He will not last long who has no capital. He cannot long stand who has no backbone within. Beware of a religion of show!

Next, this man had nothing to hold to. He built a house, but it stood upon the loose soil. He easily dug into that and stuck up his house but his walls had no holdfast. Beware of a religion without holdfasts! But if I get a grip upon a doctrine, they call me a bigot you say. Let them do so! Bigotry is a hateful thing and yet that which is now abused as bigotry is a great virtue and greatly needed in these frivolous times! I have been inclined, lately, to start a new denomination, and call it, the Church of the Bigoted. Everybody is getting to be so oily, so plastic, so untrue, that we need a race of hard-shells to teach us how to believe!

Those old-fashioned people who, in former ages, believed something and thought the opposite of it to be false, were truer folk than the present time-servers. I should like to ask the divines of the broad school whether any doctrine is worth a mans dying for it. They would have to reply, Well, of course, if a man had to go to the stake or change his opinions, the proper way would be to state them with much diffidence and to be extremely respectful to the opposite school. But suppose he is required to deny the Truth of God? Well, there is much to be said on each side, and probably the negative may have a measure of truth in it as well as the positive. At any rate, it cannot be a prudent thing to incur the odium of being burned, and so it might be preferable to leave the matter an open question for the time being.

Yes, and as these gentlemen always find it unpleasant to be unpopular, they soften down the hard threats of Scripture as to the world to come and put a color upon every doctrine to which worldly-wise men object! The teachers of doubt are very doubtful teachers! A man must have something to hold to, or he will neither bless himself or others. Bring all the ships into the pool but do not moor or anchor one of themlet each one be free! Wait for a stormy night and they will dash against each otherand great mischief will come of this freedom! Perfect love and charity will not come through our being all unmoored, but by each having his proper moorings and keeping to them in the name of God. You must have something to hold to!

But the builder in the parable had not, and so he perished. The foolish builder had nothing to resist outward circumstances. On summer days his house was a favorite resort and was considered to be quite as good as his neighbors in all respects. Frequently he rubbed his hands and said, I do not see but what my house is quite as good as his and perhaps a little better! The fact is, I had a few pounds to spare which I did not bury in the ground, as he did, and with it I have bought many a little ornament, so that my habitation has a finer look than his building. So it seemedbut when the torrent came raging down the mountain side, his building, having nothing with which to resist the violence of the flood, fell down at onceand not a trace of it remained when the storm had ceased. Thus do men fail because they offer no resistance to forces which drive them into sinthe great current of evil finds in them victimsnot opponents.

III. Thirdly, we will now gather from our text A SET OF ARGUMENTS URGING US TO TAKE CARE OF THE FOUNDATION. I will glance over these arguments, wishing much that I had time to enforce them. The first is this. We ought to build with a good foundation at the beginning, because otherwise we shall not build well in any other part of the house. Bad work in the foundation influences all the rest of the courses. In the Revised Version, at the end of the 48th verse, instead of, For it was founded upon a rock, we read, Because it had been well built. The house was built well at the bottom and that led the workman to put in good work all the way up, so that all through, it had been well built.

The other man built badly underground and did the same up to the roof! When you get into the habit of slovenly work in secret, the tendency is to be slovenly in public, too. If the underground part of our religion is not firmly laid upon Christ, then in the upper part there will be rotten work, half-baked bricks, mud instead of mortar and a general skimping of everything. When a great Grecian artist was fashioning an image for the temple, he was diligently carving the back part of the goddess, and one said to him, You need not finish that part of the statue, because it is to be built into the wall. He replied, The gods can see in the wall. He had a right idea of what is due to God! That part of my religion which no man can see should be as perfect as if it were to be observed by all. The Day shall declare it! When Christ shall come, everything shall be made known and published before the universe. Therefore see to it that it is fit to be thus made known.

See, again, that we ought to have good foundations when we look at the situation where the house is to be built. It is clear from this parable that both these houses were built in places not far from a river, or where streams might be expected to come. Certain parts of the South of France are marvelously like Palestine and, perhaps at the present moment, they are more like what the Holy Land was in Christs day than the Holy Land is now. When I reached Cannes, last year, I found that there had been a flood in the town. This flood did not come by reason of a river being swollen, but through a deluge of rain. A waterspout seems to have burst upon the hillside tearing up earth, rocks, stones and then hurrying down to the sea. It rushed across the railway station and poured down the street which led to it, drowning several persons in its progress.

When I was there a large hotelI should think five stories highwas shored up with timber and was evidently doomed, for when this stream rushed down the narrow street it undermined the lower courses of the building and, as there were no foundations at all able to bear such a test, the whole structure was rendered unsafe. The Savior had some such case in His minds eye. A torrent of water would come tearing down the side of the mountainand if a house were built on the mere earth, it would be carried awaybut if it were fastened into the rock so that it became part and parcel of it, then the flood might rush all around it, but it would not shake the walls.

Beloved builder of a house for your soul, your house is so situated that one of these days there must come great pressure upon it. How do you know? Well, I know that the house in which my soul lives is pitched just where winds blow, waves rise and storms beat. Where is yours? Do you live in a snug corner? Yes, but one of these times you will find that the snug corner will be no more shielded than the open riverside, for God so orders Providence that every man has his test sooner or later! It may be that you think yourself past temptation, but the idea is a delusion, as time will show! Perhaps from the very fact that you seem quite out of the way, a peculiar temptation may befall you. Therefore, I pray you, because of the exposed condition of your lifes building, build upon a good foundation!

The next argument is, build deep, because of the ruin which will result from a bad foundation. The foolish builders house was without a foundation. Notice that word, without a foundation. Write down the expression and see whether they apply to you or not. What happened to this house without a foundation? The stream beat vehemently on it! The rivers bed had long been dry, but suddenly it was flooded and the torrent rolled with tremendous power. Perhaps it was persecution. Perhaps it was prosperity. Perhaps it was trouble, or temptation. Perhaps it was prevalent skepticism or death, but, whateverthe flood beat vehemently upon that house!

And now we read the next wordAnd immediately it fell. It did not stand a prolonged assault! It was captured at once. Immediately it fell. What? In a minute all that fair profession gone? Immediately it fell. Why, that is the man I shook hands with the other Sunday and called him, Brother, and he has been seen drunk! Or he has been in the frivolous assembly, using unhallowed language! Or he has become an utter doubter all on a sudden! It is sorrowful work burying our friends, but it is much more sorrowful work to lose them in this fashionand yet so they vanish. They are gone! Even as Job says the east wind carries him away and he departs. Immediately they fall and yet we thought so highly of them and they thought so highly of themselves. Immediately it felltheir profession could not endure trialand all because it had no foundation!

Then it is added, And the ruin of that house was great. The house came down with a crash and it was all the man had. The man was an eminent professor and, therefore, his ruin was all the more notable. It was a great fall because it could never be built up, again. When a man dies a hypocrite, certainly there is no hope of restitution for him. By the stream the very debris of the ruined house was swept away. Nothing was left. Oh, men, if you lose a battle, you may fight, again, and win another. If you fail in business you may start, again, in trade and realize a fortune. But if you lose your souls, the loss is irretrievable! Once lost, forever lost! There will be no second opportunity! Do not deceive yourselves about that. Therefore, dig deep and lay every stone most firmly upon the foundation of rock.

For lastly, and perhaps this will be the best argument, observe the effect of this good, sure buildingthis deep building. We read that when the flood beat upon the wise mans house, it could not shake it. That is very beautiful. Not only could it not carry it away, but, it could not shake it. I see the manhe lost his money and became poor, but he did not give up his faithIt could not shake it. He was ridiculed and slandered. And many of his former friends gave him the cold shoulderbut, It could not shake it. He went to Jesus under his great trial and he was sustained It could not shake it. He was very sick and his spirit was depressed within him, but he still held to his confidence in ChristIt could not shake it.

He was near to death. He knew that he must soon depart out of this world, but all the pains of death and the certainty of dissolution could not shake him. He died as he livedfirm as a rock, rejoicing as much as ever, nayrejoicing more because he was nearer to the Kingdom and to the fruition of all his hopes! It could not shake it. It is a grand thing to have a faith which cannot be shaken! I saw, one day, a number of beech trees which had formed a small forestthey had all fallen to the ground through a storm. The fact was they leaned upon one another, to a great extent, and the thickness of the forest prevented each tree from getting a firm hold of the soil. They kept each other up and also forced each other to grow up tall and thin, to the neglect of a strong root growth. When the storm forced down the first few trees, the others readily followed one after the other.

Close to that same spot, I saw another tree in the open, bravely defying the blast, in solitary strength. The hurricane had beaten upon it, but it had endured all its force unsheltered! That lone, brave tree seemed to be better rooted than before the storm. I thought, Is it not so with professors? They often hold together and help each other to grow up, but if they have not firm personal roothold, when a storm arises they fall in rows. A minister dies, or certain leaders are taken awayand over go the members by departure from the faith and from holiness! I would have you be self-contained, growing, each man, into Christ for himself, rooted and grounded in love and faith and every holy Grace. Then when the worse storm that ever blew on mortal man shall come, it will be said of your faith, It could not shake it.

I beseech you who are now seeking Christ to take care that you build well, that you may stand long in our Zion, steadfast and unmovable. God grant it for Christs sake. Amen.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
Sermon #600 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE CENTURIONOR, AN EXHORTATION TO THE VIRTUOUS   
NO. 600

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

**And when they came to Jesus, they besought Him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom He should do this: for he loves our nation   
and he has built us a synagogue. Then   
Jesus went with them. And when He   
was now not far from the house,   
the centurion sent friends to Him, saying   
unto Him, Lord, trouble not Yourself: for I   
am not worthy that You should enter under   
my roof: why neither thought I myself worthy   
to come unto You: but say in a word and my   
servant shall be healed. For I also am a   
man set under authority, having under   
me soldiers and I say unto one, Go   
and he goes. And to another, Come   
and he comes. And to my servant, Do   
this and he does it. When Jesus heard   
these things, He marveled at him and   
turned Him about and said unto the   
people that followed Him, I say unto   
you, I have not found so great faith,   
no, not in Israel.   
Luke 7:4-9.**

THIS Centurion certainly had a high reputation. Two features of character blend in him which do not often meet in such graceful harmony. He won the high opinion of others and yet he held a low estimation of himself. There are some who think little of themselves. And they are quite correct in their feelings as all the world would endorse the estimate of their littleness. Others there are who think great things of themselvesbut the more they are known the less they are praisedand the higher they carry their heads the more the world laughs them to scorn!

Nor is it unusual for men to think great things of themselves because the world commends or flatters them. They robe themselves with pride and cloak themselves with vanity because they have by some means, either rightly or wrongly, won the good opinion of others. There are very few who have the happy combination of the text. The elders say of the centurion that he is worthy. But he says of himself, Lord, I am not worthy!

They commend him for building God a house. But he thinks that he is not worthy that Christ should come under the roof of his house. They plead his merit. But he pleads his demerit.

Thus he appeals to the power of Christ apart from anything that he felt in himself or thought of himself. O that you and I might have this blessed combination in ourselves! To win the high opinion of others, so far as it can be gained by integrity, by uprightness and by decision of character and yet at the same time to walk humbly with our God! Now there are three things I shall speak about tonight and may God make them profitable. First, here is a high character. Secondly, here is deep humility. And, thirdly, here is, notwithstanding that deep humility, a very mighty faith.

I. To begin, then, dear Friends, here is A HIGH CHARACTER. Let us thoroughly appreciate it and give it a full measure of commendation. When preaching Jesus Christ to the chief of sinners, we have sometimes half dreamed that some who are moral and upright might think themselves excludedthey ought not to think so, nor is it fair for them to draw such an inference. We have heard the whisper of some who have said they could almost wish that they had been more abandoned and dissolute in the days of their unregeneracy so they might have a deeper repentance and be witnesses of a more palpable and thorough change and that they might never have cause to doubt of the triumph of Grace in their experience!

We have even heard some say, I could have wished that I had groveled in the very mire of sinnot that I love iton the contrary, I loathe it. But because had I then to be rescued from such a course of life, the change would be so manifest and apparent that I should never dare to ask myself whether I was a changed man or not. I should

feel it and see it in my daily course and conversation. Dear Friends, if anything we have ever said should have led you into this mistake we are sorry for itit was never our intention. While we would open the gates of mercy so wide that the greatest blasphemer, the most unchaste and the most debauched may not be without hopeyet we never want to shut those gates in the face of such as have been brought up in a godly mannerthose who through the Providence of God and the checks of education have been kept from the grosser vices.

On the contrary, we thought that when we opened it for the worst there would be room for the best! And if Noahs ark took in the unclean, certainly the clean would not be afraid to enter. If Jesus Christ was able to cure those who were far gone in sickness, you might infer that He would certainly be able to heal those who, though they were sick, might not be so far advanced in disease! Besides, a little reflection may suggest to you that the penitence of contrite Believers is not regulated by the extent of their crimes against what you call the moral code. It is one thing to estimate sin by its apparent turpitude and another and an infinitely better thing to have the eyes of the understanding enlightenedto see sin in its infinite malignity as it appears in the light of heavenly purity and perfection which proceeds from the Throne of God, or as it is reflected from Mount Calvary where the amazing Sacrifice of Christ was offered.

What? Do you think the whitewashed sepulcher of a Pharisees heart is less loathsome to the Almighty than the open pollution of a Magdalenes life? Or, in the matter of experience, could the recollection of a thousand debaucheries give such a melting sense of contrition as a sight of the Crucified One? O Friends, let me remind you of the words of Jesus, When Hethe Spirit of Truthis come, He will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me.

That one sin of unbelief is such a concentration of all wickedness that it could outweigh the crimes of Sodom and Gomorrah and make them more excusable in the Day of Judgment than the men of Capernaum who saw the mighty works of Christ and did not repent! That one sin of unbelief is so heinous that the groans of the whole creation were but pitiful sighs to deplore it! And rivers of tears were but a weak tribute to lament it. However, as mistakes do arise and misapprehensions will take place, let us have a few words concerning a high character in the sight of men. Such a character among your fellow creatures may be gained in any situation.

The centurion was a soldiera profession of life not altogether the most favorable for moral excellencethough there have been in the army some of the brightest saints that ever lived. He was a soldier, moreover, in a foreign countrynot the place where he was likely to win esteem. He was there as one of the representatives of a power which had conquered Judea and had treated it with great cruelty. Yet, notwithstanding the prejudices of race and nationality, this mans kindness of disposition and goodness of conduct had won for him the esteem of others.

Moreover, being a commander of soldiers, he, naturally, would be blamed for every act of violence committed by his soldiers. Whatever might be done by his hundred men would be laid to the captain, so that his was a condition of peculiar difficulty and yet, notwithstanding this, the elders said, He is worthy. Let none of you despair! Wherever you may be placed, a noble character may be earned. You may serve God in the most menial capacity but you may compel your very foes to admit your excellence! You may stand without blame before men and you may walk so uprightly before God that those who watch for your stumbling may bite their lips with disappointmentwhile they shall not have a single word to say against you except it is about the religion of your God and King.

Let no man, wherever he may be thrownthough he is surrounded by those who tempt himdespair, especially if the Grace of God is in him. Let him pray like Joab that he may have favor in the eyes of his Master and expect to win it. This centurion must have been a man of sterling worth. He was not merely quiet and inoffensive like some men who are as

dull as they are harmless. Though a high character may be won, it cannot be won without being earned. Men do not get character among their fellows by indolence and listlessness, or by pretensions and talk. Action! Action!this is what the world wants!

And there is more truth than we have dreamed of in Nelsons opinion England expects every man to do his duty. Certainly men will not speak well of you unless you do well. This centurion did so, for you will observe that they said he was worthywhich must have signified that he was just in his dealings and generous in his habitsor they would not have thought him worthy. It would appear, too, that his private temperament as well as his public spirit contributed to the estimation in which he was held. You will notice in the circumstances which bring him before us, how his tender feelings and his intense anxiety were drawn out on behalf, not of a child, but of a servantperhaps of a slave!

And then we might have thought it had been enough to have said that the man was highly valued by his masterbut the expression is one of fondnesshe was, dear unto him. The fidelity of the servant may be implied, but it is the amiability of the master which is most prominent and chiefly arrests our attention. Nor need we overlook the fact that Matthew lays an emphasis upon the servant being, at home, under his masters roof. We know that the Romans were not remarkable for the kindness they showed to their dependantsoften they were merely looked upon as slaves.

Why, in our own days and in the midst of our boasted civilization, when Christianity has exerted a salutary influence upon all our social relations, I suppose it is not uncommon for a domestic servant to go home to her parents house in the case of sickness. It is not every good man among us, I fear, whose gentleness would equal that of the centurion in the love which he bears to his servant and the comfort he provided for him in his own house!

Next to this you will observe his generosity. It is not, my dear Friends, by occasional deeds of showy luster but by the habitual practice of lovely virtues that a worthy character is built up. A thousand kindnesses may be nestling beneath the soil like the many-fibred root of a gigantic tree, when it is said, He loves our nation, and then the conspicuous fruit appears in its seasonHe has built us a synagogue. This example of liberality is spoken of as a mere supplement. The Jewish elders do not say, He loves our nation forbut they say, he loves our nation and he has built us a synagogue. This last was a visible token of innumerable good offices which had already won their secret esteem before it bloomed in an open reputation.

I have heard all sorts of men praised and I have noted the qualities which win the plaudits of the crowd. Even the high and haughty have some to praise them. But I think I never heard a niggardly man praised, or one who was perpetually guilty of meanness. Let him have whatever virtues he may, if he lack liberality, few, if any, will speak well of him. Let me commend liberality to the Christianin all his actions and benevolencein all his thoughts. This may sound commonplace, but I am persuaded that the little tricks in tradethose little savings of the pence, those sharp dealingsare just the things which bring religion into disrepute. It were infinitely better that the Christian should pay too much than too little. He had better be blamed for an excess of generosity than take credit to himself for a rigid stinginess.

Rather let him become, now and then, the dupe of an imposter than shut up the heart of his compassion against his fellow man. I would seek, Christian man, to win a noble character. I cannot see how you can do so except you should put generosity into the scale and enroll it in the list of your virtues. A high character, when earned, is very useful. I am saying this because some might imagine that in the preaching of the Gospel we put the base and the wicked before those who have walked uprightly. A good character, a good reputation in the esteem of men, when earned, may win for us as it did for this centurion, kind thoughts, kind words, kind acts, kind prayers.

There is many a man who will pray for you if he sees you walk uprightly. Yes, and your very adversary who would otherwise have cursed you, will find the curse trembling on his tongue. Though he would gladly scorn, yet does he bate his breath, abashed at your excellencies. Let the Christian labor so to live that he shall not lack a friend. Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, is one of Christs own precepts. If to stoop, to cringe, to lie, wins you friends, do not do it! But if with uprightness before God you can still mingle such affection and such generosity towards men that you shall win their support, do it, I pray you. The time may come when their sympathy shall befriend you.

But remember, and here I close this point, however good your character or however excellent your reputation, not one word of this is ever to be mentioned before the Throne of the Most High. Job could say when he was talking with his adversaries, I am not wicked. He could boast in his excellencies, as he did. But in the Presence of God how he changed his noteNow my eyes see You: why I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. Coming before the Lord, we must all come as sinners. When on your knees you have nothing to boast of more than the worst rogue or the man who has sinned against his countrys laws. There, at the foot of the Cross, one needs the cleansing blood as much as the other. At mercys gate we must alike knock and we must be fed by the same generous hand. There are no degrees herewe enter by the same door. We come to the same Savior.

And we shall ultimatelyGlory be to His name!sit together in the same Heaven whether we have earned a good reputation or not! Whether we have crept into Heaven, as the thief did at the eleventh hour, or through forty and five years of public service earned the applause of men, as did Caleb the son of Jephunneh

*Nothing in my hand I bring,*

*Simply to Your Cross I cling,*   
must be the common footing and the like confession of both before the God of Mercy. Thus much by way of tribute to the high character of the centurion and the high motives to emulate it.

II. Secondly, in the centurion we see coupled with this high and noble repute, DEEP HUMILIATION OF SOUL. I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Humility, then, it appears, may exist in any condition. There are some men who are too mean to be humble. Do you understand me? They are too crouching, crawling, sneaky and abject to be humble. When they use humble words, they disgrace the words they use! You perceive at once that it is rather a rise than a stoop for them to be humble.

How could it be otherwise? It certainly is not for the least vermin that creep the earth to talk about humility. They must be lowit is their proper place. Such the creatures who cringe and fawnWhatever you please, Sir, Yes, No, in the same breath. They have not a soul within them that would be worth the notice of a sparrow hawk. They are too little to be worthy of observation yet they say they are humble! A man, to be humble, needs to have a soulto stoop, you must have some elevation to stoop from. You must have some real excellence within you before you can really understand what it is to renounce merit.

Had the centurion been unworthy, had he been ungenerous and an oppressor, he would have spoken the truth when he said, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. But there would have been no true humility in what he said. It was because of his excellence, as acknowledged by others, that he could be humble in the modesty of his opinion of himself. We have heard of a certain monk who, professing to be humble, said he had broken all Gods Commandments. He said he was the greatest sinner in the worldhe was as bad as Judas. Somebody said, Why tell us that? We have all of us thought that a long time! Straightway the holy man grew red in the face and struck the accuser and asked him what he had ever done to deserve such an accusation!

We know some of that kindthey will use the words of humility, appear very contrite and perhaps even at Prayer Meetings you would think them the meekest and most broken-hearted of menbut if you were to take them at their word, straightway they would tell you they use the language as some ecclesiastical personages do, in a non-natural sense! They do not quite mean what they were supposed to mean, but something very different. That is not humilityit is a kind of mock-modesty which hankers after applause and holds out specious words as a bait for the trap of approbation.

Our centurion was truly humble. This a man may be, though possessing the highest excellence and standing in the most eminent position. I believe, in my soul, that no man had truer humility in him than John Knox and yet John Knox never cringed and never bowed. When Luther dared the thunders of the Vatican, no doubt many said how selfconceited, egotistical and proud he was. But for all that, God knew how humbly Martin Luther walked with Him. When Athanasius stood up and said, I, Athanasius, against the world, it had the ring of pride about it but there was true and sound humility before God in itbecause he seemed to say, What am I? Not worthy of taking care of. And therefore I do not use the deceptions of cowardice for my own personal safety. Let the world do what it will to me, Gods Truth is infinitely more precious than I am and so I give myself up as an offering upon its altar.

True humility will agree with the highest chivalry in maintaining Divine Truth and with the boldest assertion of what one knows in his own conscience to be true. Though it may be the lot of Christians to be thought proud, let it never be true or capable of being substantiated concerning them. The centurion, though worthy, was still humble. His friends and neighbors gauged him by what he said and what he did. He asked them to go for him, seeing he was not worthy. Then, finding that they asked too great a gift, he comes to stop themI am not worthy that You should enter under my roof.

You need not tell people that you are humble. You have no occasion to advertise that you have genuine humilitylet it discover itself as spice does, by its perfumeor as fire, by its burning. If you live near to God and if your humility is of the right kind it will tell its own tale before long. But the place where humility does speak out is at the Throne of Grace. Beloved, there are some things we would confess of ourselves before God which we would not confess before men. There is an attitude of prostration at the Throne of the Most High which will never be so gracefully or graciously taken as by that man who would spurn to prostrate himself before his fellows.

That is not true humility which bends the knee at the tyrants throne that is true humility which, having bearded the tyrant to his face, goes down on its knees before the God of Heavenbold as a lion before men, but meek as a lamb before Jehovah! The true man, whom God approves, will notdares notturn aside the love he bears his sovereign Lord when he faces men. But when he is alone with his Maker he veils his face with something better than the wings of angels!

Wrapped all over with the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, he rejoices with fear and trembling that he is justified from all things. Yet, conscious of the total defilement of his nature, with deep prostration of

soul he uses the lepers cry, Unclean! Unclean! Unclean! Thus does he fix all his hope upon that cleansing blood and depends alone on that meritorious obedience of Jesus upon which every sanctified Believer exclusively relies. Seek, then, as much as lies in you, that high character which the Christian should maintain among men. But with it always blend that true humility which comes of the Spirit of God and ever behooves us in the Presence of the Lord.

III. The main thing I am aiming at, because, after all, the most practical, lies in my third point. However deep our humility, however conscious we may be of our own unworthiness, WE SHOULD NEVER DIMINISH OUR FAITH IN GOD. Observe the confessionI am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. What then will be the inference? I fear, therefore, my servant will not be healed? No, no! ButSay in a Word and my servant shall be healed!

It is all a mistake that great faith implies pride. Beloved, the greater the faith, the deeper the humility. These are brothers, not foes. The more the Glories of God strike your eyes, the humbler you will lie in conscious abasement but the higher you will rise in importunate prayer! Let us take this principle and endeavor to apply it to a few cases. I say that a deep sense of our own nothingness is not to prevent our having strong faith. We will take a few instances. There is a minister here who has been preaching the Word of Godhe has so proclaimed it that God has been pleased to own it in some degree.

But, it may be, he has stirred up strife. He has caused, I know not what amount of turmoil and of noise, as the faithful servant of God will in his measure. And now, coming before God, he is asking that a greater blessing than ever may rest upon his labors. But something checks his tongue. He remembers his many infirmities. He remembers, perhaps, how slack he is in his private devotions and how cold he is in his pleading with the sons of men. He has before Him the promise, My Word shall not return unto Me void. But for all that, he is so conscious that he does not deserve the honor of being useful that he is half afraid to pray as he should pray and to believe as he should believe.

Dear Brother, may I press upon you the case of the centurion? It is right for youit is right for me, to say, Lord, I am not worthy to be made the spiritual parent of one immortal soul. It is right for me to feel that it is too great an honor to be permitted to preach the Truth of God at all and almost too high a thing for such a sinner to have any jewels to present to the Redeemer to fix in His crown! But, oh, we must not from this infer that He will not fulfill His promise to us and hear our prayers! Lord, speak in a Word and, feeble though the instrument may be, the congregation shall be blessed! Say but the Word and the marvelous testimony, though marred with a thousand imperfections, shall yet be quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword.

Let this comfort and cheer any desponding pastorlet him take heart from this and learn that it is not himself to whom he is look to, but that he is to look to God. And that it is not his own arm upon which he is to depend, but the promise of God and the strong arm of the Most High. Or, am I addressing some Brother or Sister in a somewhat similar perplexity of mind? In your private life, dear Friend, you have laid upon your heart some of your relatives and neighbors who are very dear to you.

Or perhaps, you teach a class in the Sunday school, or possibly you have a larger class of adults and sometimes Satan will be very busy with you. The more useful you are, the more busy he will be. And he will say to you, What are you, that you should ever hope to see conversions? Other men and women have had them, but they were better than you arethey had more talent. They had more ability. They served God better. And God gave them a greater reward. You must not hope to see your children saved! You cannot expect it. How should such teaching as yours ever be useful?

Friend, you are right in saying, Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. The more you can feel that, the more hopeful shall I be of your success! You are right in feeling that David is not fit to meet the giant and that the stones out of the brook are scarcely fit weapons for such a warfare. But, oh, do not push the right into a wrong! Do not, therefore, mistrust your God! No matter what a fool you may beGod has confused wise things by the foolish long before now. No matter how weak you areGod has brought down the mighty by weak instrumentalities often enough before this time!

Have hope in Him and tonight in your prayers, when you have made your confessions, do not let your faith fail you, but say, Lord, say in a Word and my class shall be blessed! Say in a Word and those stubborn boys and girls, those to whom I have talked so often, who seem to be none the bettershall be saved. Have faith in God, beloved fellow workers! The result of all, under God, must rest with your faith! If you believe for little success, you shall have little success. But if you can believe for great things and expect great things, you shall certainly find your Masters Words fulfilling your desire!

Do I now also address parents here who have been praying for their children? Or a husband who has been pleading for his wife? Or a wife who has been making intercession for her husband? God only knows what heart-rending prayers are often heard in families where only a part is saved! Ah, what grief is it to a truly godly father to see his sons and daughters still heirs of wrath! And what a pang to know that the partner of your bosom must be separated from you forever by the stroke of death! I marvel not that you pray for your friends! Should I not marvel at you if you did not? And now, when you have been praying lately, a sense of

your unworthiness has almost stopped you. And though, perhaps, there has been no public sin about youbefore others you could have defended yourselfyou have said in private, Lord, I am not worthy of this blessing.

You have said, Lord, my children are not saved because my example is not as good as it should be. My conversation is not as upright as it should be. You have felt, as I have sometimes, that there was no creature in the whole world so little and no man loved of God in all the world that was so great a wonder of ingratitude as you are. I say it is right that you should feel thisbut do not let this stop your prayers! Offer your request! Depend upon the blood of Christ for its plea and upon the intercession of Christ for its prevalence! Do not be afraid!

An evil hand drops a letter into the post office, but the blackness of that hand will not hinder the dispatch of it. There is a stamp upon it and it will go. And your black hand drops a prayer before Christs feet, but that black hand will not stop its being heard, for there is a stamp upon itJehovah Jesus blood! It may be blotted and misspelled and there may be many blurs all over it, but do not be afraid, for God knows His Sons signature and that will give a worth to your prayers. It is the bloody signature of Him whose hand was nailed to the Cross that will carry the day with God. Therefore do not, I pray you, give place to fearyour prayers shall return into your bosom with an answer of peace.

Well, but, says one, I have prayed so long. Ah, Brother, do not, limit the Holy One of Israel. Sister, do not let your doubts prevail. Renew your appeal to Jesus, Say in a Wordonly say one Word. It is all done if He shall speak! Darkness fled before Him in the primeval chaos and order followed confusion. Do you think, if He shall say, Let there be light in a dark heart, that there shall not be light there? Angels fly at His bidding at His Presence the rocks melt and the hills dissolveSinai is altogether on a smoke. And when He comes forth, dressed in the robes of salvation, there are no impossibilities with Him. He can win and conquer to your hearts best desire. Therefore be humble, but be not unbelieving.

By your leave, I shall now turn the principle of my text to an account in another way. Concerning yourselves, Friends, what are the mercies which you want? If every man could write down his own peculiar prayer, what a variety we should have upon the paper as it just went round the front row of that gallery. If it went round to all, it would not be like Jeremiahs roll, written within and without with lamentations, but it would be filled within and without with many petitions! But now just imagine what your own case is and the case of others and let us apply this principle to itwe are utterly unworthy to obtain the temporal or spiritual mercy which, it may be, we are now seekingwe may feel this, but in asking anything for ourselves we must still ask in faith in Godin His promise and in His Graceand we shall prevail.

This blessed principle may be turned to all sorts of uses. Whatever your desire may be, only believe and it shall be granted unto you if it is a desire in accordance with His will and in accordance with the promises of His Wordor else Gods Word is not true. Be humble about it, but do not be doubtful about it. The case I have in my minds eye is thisthere is an unsaved soul here tonight. It happens to be one whose character has been morally admirable. Nobody finds any fault with you, and, as I said before, you almost wish they could! You cannot feel, as some do, the terrors of the Lord. Your heart is not broken with conviction as the hearts of some are, but there is this desire in it, Lord, save me, or I perish!

Now, dear Friend, it is well that you should feel that there is nothing in you to commend you to Christ. I am glad that you feel this. Though before the eyes of men and even of your own parents there is nothing which can cause you a blush, I am glad that you feel that before God you have nothing whatever to boast of. I think I see you nowyou are saying, My Church goings, my Chapel goings, I do not trust in themI would not give up attendance at the means of Grace, but, Sir, I have no reliance upon all this. As for my Baptism, or my confirmation, or my taking the sacrament, I know that all this has nothing whatever in it which can save my soul. And though I love Gods ordinances, yet I cannot trust in them. Sir, I have fed the poor. I have taught the ignorant. In my measure I would do anything to assist those who need my aid. But I do solemnly renounce all this as a ground of trust. I have nothing of which to glory.

Well now, dear Friend, there remains only one thing to give you perfect peace tonight! And may the Master give you that one thing! Lift up this prayer to Him, Say in a Word and I shall be made whole. Christ can do it! The offering is made. The precious blood is spilt. There is an almighty efficacy in itHe can put away your sin. Christ lives to intercede before the Throne and is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. Doubt not, then, but now, trusting yourself with Jesus Christ, remember you are saved!

I am not now looking for the vilest of the vile. How many times have we said from this place that none are excluded? None but those who exclude themselves. No mountains of sin nor height of vileness can shut a man out of Heaven if he believes in Jesusbut just now we are after you. I know you are a numerous class. You are, in some respects, our dear Friends. And though not of us, you hover round us. If there is anything to be done for the cause of God, you are, perhaps, first in it. And yet you, yourselves, are not saved! I cannot bear the thought of your being cast awayto be so near the gates of Heaven and yet to be shut out after all! Why should it be? The voice speaks to you nowthe Spirit of the living God speaks through that voice.   
There is life in a look for you as well as for the chief of sinners! Without the strong convictions, without the terrors of conscience, without a sense of any aggravated crimesif you rest on Jesus, you are saved! There is no amount of sin specified there. You are lost in the Fallwholly losteven if you had no sin of your own. But your own actual sin has irretrievably ruined you apart from the Grace of Christ. You know this and to an extent you feel it. You will feel it all the more when you have believed in Jesus. But now the one message of mercy is, Believe and you shall live. I feel as if I cannot get at you. My soul will not go out as I desire and yet you know that I am talking about you and about your case.

When we are firing our shots at sin we hardly ever strike you. You have become so used to our appeals that there seems no likelihood of our getting at you. Oh, there are some of you whom I would not find fault with if I could. You make your mother glad with your industry. You make your sisters heart rejoice at your many virtues. But yet there is one thing which you lack! Remember that when the strength of a chain is to be measured, it is measured at its one weakest link. If you have that one weak link, the vital union is snapped.

You may have anything and everything else, but you will be only a child of nature and not a living son! I am only telling you over and over Truths of God which you have known for many years. You will not dispute these things. And sometimes you feel an earnestness about your eternal portion, though, like so many others, you are putting off and putting off. But death will not put off! The Judgment Day will not be postponed for you. O may you be brought in now! What a happy Church we should be if such as you should be brought in. We rejoice over the chief of sinnerswe make the place ring when the prodigals come in. But elder Brother, why will you not come in?

You who have not been standing all the day in the market idle, but only the first hoursay not, no man has hired you. O come in, that the house of mercy may be filled! God grant the desire of our hearts and to His name shall be the praise. Amen and Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #800 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE CENTURIONS FAITH AND HUMILITY NO. 800

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, MARCH 15, 1868, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Then Jesus went with them. And when He was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him,   
saying unto Him, Lord, trouble not Yourself: for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Why neither thought I myself worthy to come unto You:   
but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority,**

**having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come,   
and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.**

**Luke 7:6-8.**

THE greatest light may enter into the darkest places. We may find the choicest flowers blooming where we least expected them. Here was a Gentile, a Roman soldiera soldier clothed with absolute powerand yet a tender master, a considerate citizen, a lover of God! Let no man, therefore, be despised because of his calling, and let not the proverb, Can any good come out of Nazareth? be ever heard from the wise mans lips. The best of pearls have been found in the darkest caves of the ocean. Why should it not be so, still, that God should have even in Sardis a few that have not defiled their garmentswho shall walk with Christ in whitefor they are worthy.

Let no man think that because of his position in society he cannot excel in virtue. It is not the place which is to blame, but the man. If your heart is right, the situation may be difficult but the difficulty is to be overcome! Yes, and out of that difficulty shall arise an excellence which you had not otherwise known. Say not in your heart, I am a soldier, and the barracks cannot minister to pietytherefore I may live as I wish because I cannot live as I should. Say not, I am a working man in the midst of those who blaspheme, and therefore it were vain for me to talk of holiness and piety. No, rather remember that in such a case it is your duty specially not only to talk of these precious things, but to wear them about you as your daily ornament! Where should the lamp be placed but in the room which else were dark? Rest assured your calling and your position shall be no excuse for your sin if you continue in it. Neither shall your condition be any apology for the absence of integrity and virtue if these are not found in you.

Concerning the centurion, we may remark that perhaps we had never heard of him though he loved his servant. Perhaps we had never read his name, though he tenderly nursed his slave. Perhaps he had found no place in the record of Inspiration, though he loved the Jewish nation and built them a synagoguenor had we read the story of his life, though he had become a proselyte to the Jewish faith. The one thing which gives him a place in these sacred pages is thishe was a believer in the Messiah he was such a believer in the Son of God that Jesus said concerning him, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

There is the vital point. There, my Hearer, is the notable matter which shall enroll you among the blessed! If you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, your name is in the Lambs Book of Life! But if you believe not in Him, your outward excellencies, however admirable, shall avail you little. The faith of the centurion is described both in the eighth chapter of Matthew, and in the chapter before us as being of the highest kind. But the remarkable point in it is that it was coupled with the very deepest humility. The same man who said, Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed, also said, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof.

In bringing before you this noble soldiers example, these are two pivots upon which the discourse shall turn. I shall direct you to this double star shining with so mild a radiance in the sky of Scripture. This mans deep humility was not injurious to the strength of his faith, and his gigantic faith was by no means hostile to his deep humiliation.

I. To begin, then, THE HUMILITY OF THE CENTURION WAS NOT AT ALL INJURIOUS TO THE STRENGTH OF HIS FAITH. Observe his humble expressionshe avowed that he was not worthy to come to Jesus. Neither, said he, thought I myself worthy to come unto You. And then he further felt that he was not worthy that Jesus should come to him. I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Was this selfabasement occasioned by the remembrance that he was a Gentile? That may have contributed to it. Was it because he was penitent on account of sundry rough and boisterous deeds which had stained his soldier life? It may be so.

Was it not far rather because he had had a deep insight into his own heart and had learned to see sin in its true colors? And therefore he who was worthy, according to the statement of the Jews, was most unworthy in his own apprehension. You may have noticed in the biography of some eminent men how badly they speak of themselves. Southey, in his Life of Bunyan, seems at a difficulty to understand how Bunyan could have used such depreciating language concerning his own character. For it is true, according to all we know of his biography, that he was not, except in the case of profane swearing, at all so bad as the most of the villagers. Indeed, there were some virtues in the man which were worthy of all commendation.

Southey attributes it to a morbid state of mind, but we rather ascribe it to a return of spiritual health! Had the excellent poet seen himself in the same heavenly light as that in which Bunyan saw himself, he would have discovered that Bunyan did not exaggerate but was simply stating, as far as he could, a truth which utterly surpassed his powers of utterance. The great light which shone around Saul of Tarsus was the outward type of that inner light above the brightness of the sun which flashes into a regenerate soul and reveals the horrible character of the sin which dwells within. Believe me, when you hear Christians making abject confessions, it is not that they are worse than others, but that they see themselves in a clearer light than others.

And this centurions unworthiness was not because he had been more vicious than other menon the contrary, he had evidently been much more virtuous than the common run of mankindbut it was because he saw what others did not see, and felt what others had not felt. Deep as was this mans contrition, overwhelming as was his sense of utter worthlessness, he did not doubt for a moment either the power or the willingness of Christ. As for the question of willingness, it does not come under remark at all! The leper had said, If You will, but the centurion was so clear about Christs willingness to relieve suffering humanity that it does not occur to him to mention it. He has long ago settled that matterand now takes it for granted as a very axiom in the knowledge of Jesusfor such a One as He must be willing to do all the good which is asked of Him.

Nor is he at all dubious about our Lords power. The palsy which afflicted the servant was a remarkably grievous onebut it did not at all stagger the centurion. He felt not only that Jesus could heal itcould heal it at once, could heal it completelybut that He could heal it without moving a step from the place where He stood. Let but the word be uttered and in an instant his servant shall be healed! O glorious Humiliation, how low you stoop! O noble Faith, how high you soar! Brothers and Sisters, if we can imitate this noble character in both respectsin the depth of his foundation and in the height of his pinnaclehow near to the model of the temple of God shall we be built up!

Empty, indeed, he was, having nothing of his own. Not worthy to receive, much less indulging a thought of giving anything to Christ, and yet confident that all things are possible with the Master and that He both can and will do according to our faithand that in a manner gloriously unveiling His kingly power. My dear Friends, especially you who are under concern of soul, you feel unworthythat is not a mistaken feelingyou are so! You are much distressed by reason of this unworthiness, but if you knew more of it you might be more distressed still, for the apprehension which you already have of your sinfulness, although it is very painful, does not at all reach to the full extent of it. You are much more sinful than you think you are. You are much more unworthy than you yet know yourself to be.

Instead of attempting a foolish and wicked soothing of your dark thoughts, and saying, you have morbid ideas of yourself, you ought not so to speak, I rather pray you to believe that yours is an utterly hopeless case apart from Christthat in your spiritual nature the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. I want you not to film the horrible ulcer of your depravity with specious hopes and professions. I desire you not to look upon this disease as though it were but skin deepit lies in the source and fountain of your lifeand poisons your heart! The flames of Hell must assuredly wrap themselves about you unless Christ interposes to save you. You have no merit of any kind or sortnor will you ever have any.

And more, you have no power to escape from your lost condition unaided by the Saviors hand. Without Christ you can do nothing, for you are abjectly poor, hopelessly bankrupt and you cannot by the utmost diligence make yourself any other than you are! No words that I can utter can exaggerate your deplorable condition, and no feelings which you can ever experience can represent your real state in colors too alarming. You are not worthy that Christ should come to you! You are not worthy to draw near to Christ! But, and here is a glorious contrastnever let this for a single moment interfere with your full belief that He who is God but who took our naturethat He who suffered in our stead upon the Crossthat He who now rules in the highest heavens is able to do for you, and willing to do for you, exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even think!

Your inability does not prevent the working of His power! Your unworthiness cannot put fetters to His bounty or limits to His Grace. You may be an ill-deserving sinner but that is no reason why He should not pardon you! You may be, in your own apprehension, and truthfully so, the most unworthy that He ever stooped to bless! Yet that is no reason why He should not condescend to press you to His bosomto accept and to save you! I wish that as the first Truth of God has impressed itself deeply upon you, the second Truth may with equal force take up the possession of your heart, that Jesus Christ is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Himand He is as

willing as He is able!

Your emptiness does not affect His fullness! Your weakness does not alter His power! Your inability does not diminish His Omnipotence! Your vileness does not restrain the heart of His love which freely moves towards the very vilest of the vile! By some means Satan almost always manages it this waythat when we get a little hope it is generally a self-grounded hopea vain idea that we are getting better in ourselves. It is a mischievous conceitproud flesh which hinders the cure and which the Surgeon must cut outit is no sign of healing, it prevents healing. On the other hand, if we obtain a deep sense of sin, the Evil One manages to put his hoof in there and to insinuate that Jesus is not able to save such as we are.

That is a great falsehood, for who shall say what the limit of Christs power is? But if these two things could but meet togethera thorough sense of sin and an immovable belief in the power of Christ to grapple with sin and to overcome itsurely the kingdom of Heaven would then have come near unto us in power and in truth! And then it would be again said, I have not found such great faith, no, not in Israel. Now, you troubled hearts, I have this word for you, and then I shall pass on to another point. Your sense of your unworthiness, if it is properly used, should drive you to Christ. You are unworthy, but Jesus died for the unworthy! Jesus did not die for those who profess to be by nature good and deserving, for the whole have no need of a physician.

It is written, In due time Christ died for the ungodly. Who gave Himself for ourwhat? Excellencies and virtues? Nowho gave Himself for our sins, according to the Scriptures. We read that He suffered, the Just for thefor the just? By no means, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Gospel pharmacy is for the sick! Gospel bread is for the hungry! Gospel fountains are open to the unclean! Gospel water is given to the thirsty! You who need not shall not havebut you who need it may freely come. Let your huge and painful needs impel you to fly to Jesus! Let the vast cravings of your insatiable spirit compel you to come to Him in whom all fullness dwells! Your unworthiness should act as a wing to bear you to Christ, the sinners Savior.

It should also have this effect upon youit should prevent your raising those scruples and making those demands which are such a hindrance to some persons finding peace. The proud spirit says, I must have signs and wonders, or I will not believe. I must feel deep convictions and horrible tremorsor I must quake because of dreams or threatening texts applied to me with awful power. Ah, but, unworthy one, if you are truly humbled, you will not dare to ask for these! You will have done with demands and stipulations! You will cry, Lord, give me but a word! Speak but a word of promise, and it shall be enough for me. Do but say to me, Your sins are forgiven you. Give me but half a text! Give me one kind assuring word to sink my fears against, and I will believe it and rest upon it.

Thus your sense of unworthiness should lead you to a simple faith in Jesus and prevent your demanding those manifestations which the foolish so eagerly and impudently require. Beloved, it has come to thisyou are so unworthy that you are shut out of every hope but Christ! All other doors are fast nailed against you. If there is anything to be done for salvation, you cannot do it. If there is any fitness needed, you have it not. Christ comes to you and tells you that there is no fitness needed for coming to Him, but that if you will but trust Him He will save you! I think I hear you say, Then, my Lord, since it has come to this

*I can but perish if I go;   
I am resolved to try   
For if I stay away,   
I know I must forever die.*

And so, sink or swim, upon Your precious Atonement, I cast my guilty soul persuaded that You are able to save even such a one as I am. And I am so thoroughly persuaded of the goodness of Your heart that I know You will not cast away a poor trembler who comes to You and takes You to be his only ground of trust.

II. I shall want you, for a moment, to attend while we shift the text to the other quarter. THE CENTURIONS GREAT FAITH WAS NOT AT ALL HOSTILE TO HIS HUMILITY. His faith was extraordinary. It ought not to be extraordinary. We ought all of us to believe as well in Christ as this soldier did. Observe the form it tookhe said to himself, I am a subordinate officer, under authority. I am not the Commander-in-Chief, I am merely the commander of a troop of a hundred men, and yet over those hundred men I exert unlimited control. I say to this one, Go, and he goes. I say to the other, Come, and he comes.

And my servant, my poor sick servant (his tender heart comes back to him, and he puts him into the illustration), I say to him, Do this, and he does it at once. I am simply a petty officer, under authority myself; but yet such is the influence of discipline that there are no questions raised, no deliberations tolerated. No soldier turns round and tells me that I have set him too difficult a task. No one, out of all the troops, ever dares to say to me, I shall not do it. The power of discipline among the legions of Rome was exceedingly great. The commander had but to say, Do it, and it was done, though thousands bled and died.

Now, argued the centurion, This glorious man is the Son of God. He is not a subordinateHe is the Commander-in-Chief. If He gives the word, His will most surely must be done. Fevers and paralysis, good influences and bad, they must all be under His controlHe can, therefore, heal my servant in a moment. Who can resist the great Caesar of Heaven and earth? That was, I believe, the centurions idea. Jesus has therefore but to will it, and to the utmost bounds of the earth those influences which are under His control will at once set to work to perform His will. The centurion pictured himself as sitting down in the house and effecting his desires without rising, by merely issuing an order. And his faith placed the Lord Jesus in the same position.

You need not come to my dwelling. You can stand here and if You will but say it, the cure will be worked at once. He did in his heart enthrone the Lord Jesus as a Captain over all the forces of the world, as the general issue of Heaven and earthas, in fact, the Caesarthe imperial Governor of all the forces of the universe. It was graciously thought. It was poetically embodied. It was nobly spoken. It was gloriously believedbut it was the truth and nothing more than the truthfor universal dominion is really, today, in the power of Jesus. If He were a true Caesar before He died, while He was despised and rejected of men, much more now that He has trod through the winepress and stained His vesture with the blood of His vanquished enemies!

Much more now that He has led captivity captive and sits enthroned by filial right at the right hand of God, even the Father! Much more now that God has sworn that He will put all things under His feet, and that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of things in Heaven, and things on earth and things that are under the earth! Much more, I say, can He now work according to His good pleasure. He has today but to speak and it is doneto command, and it shall stand fast. Beloved, see whether this truth bears us as on eagles wings. Caesar has but to say, Absolute, and his guilty subject is acquitted. Caesar has but to speak, and a province is conquered, an army routed. Stormy seas are navigated at Caesars biddingmountains are tunneled, the whole world shall be girded with military roadsCaesar is absolute and his will is law.

So on earth, but so much more in Heaven. Let the imperial Caesar of Heaven but say, I forgive, and the devils of Hell cannot accuse you. Let Him say, I will help you, and who shall oppose? If Emmanuel is for you, who shall be against you? Let Him speak and the bonds of sinful habit must fall off, and the darkness in which your soul has long been immersed must give place to instantaneous light. He reigns as King, Lord over all! Let His name be blessed forever! Let each one of us, by our faith, give Him the honor that is due unto His name. All hail! great Emperor, once slain, but now forever Lord of Heaven and earth!

Here is one point to which I remind youthis mans faith did not for a moment interfere with his thorough personal humiliation. Interfere with it? My Brethren, it was the source of it! It was the very foundation on which it rested. Dont you see, the higher his thoughts of Christ, the more unworthy he felt himself to be of the kind attentions of so good and great a Personage? If he had thought less of Jesus, he would not have said, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. There was, of course, a sight of himself to humble him, but the far more wondrous vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus was the true root and parent of his selfabasement. Because Christ was so great he felt himself to be unworthy either to meet Him or entertain Him.

Observe, my Brothers and Sisters, his faith acted upon his humility by making him content with a word from Christ. His faith said, A word is enoughit will work the cure. And then his humility said, Ah, how unworthy I am even of so little a thing as a word. If a word will work a miracle, it is so great and powerful a thing that it is more than I deserve. Therefore, said he, I will not ask for more. I will not ask for footsteps when a sound will suffice. I will not clamor for His Presence when His wish can restore my servant to health. His believing that a word was enough made him humbly decline to pray for moreso that his confidence in Christ, instead of interfering with his sense of unworthiness aided its manifestation.

Brothers and Sisters, never think for a moment, as many foolish persons do, that strong faith in the Lord is necessarily prideit is the reverse. It is one of the worst forms of pride to question the promise of God. When a man says, Christ has promised to save those who trust Him. I have trusted Him, therefore I am saved. I know I am. I am sure of it, because God says so and I do not need any better evidence, that assurance is

humility in action. But if a man says, God has said that those who trust Him shall be saved. I do trust Him, but still I do not know that I am saved, why, you do as much as say you do not know whether God is a liar or not! And what more impertinent, what more proudly insulting thing than that?

I know it is a most common thing to say, It seems so presumptuous to say I know I am saved. I think it far more presumptuous to doubt, when God speaks positively, and to mistrust where the promise is plain! God says, He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. If you believe and are baptized, if God is true, you shall be savedyou are saved! There is no hoping about itit is so. Let God be true and every man a liarand far off from these lips the insinuation of a doubt that perhaps God can be false to His promise and may break His word. If you question anything, question whether you trust Christ! But that settled, the question is ended. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. If you rest alone on Him, your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you. Take God at His word as your child takes you at your word. It is not too much for God to askyou ask it of your child.

Though you are a poor fallible creature, you would not have your child mistrust you. Shall you be believed, and not your God? Shall your little one be expected to confide in you, though you are evil, and will not you believe the voice of your heavenly Parent to be the very Truth of God, and rest upon it? Ah, do so, I beseech you, and the more you do it, the more you will feel your unworthiness to do so! It astounds me to think that I shall be saved! It amazes me to think I shall be washed from my every sin in the precious blood of Christthat I shall be set upon a rock and a new song shall be put into my mouth. It astounds me, and as I think of it, I say, How unworthy I am of such favors! I am less than the least of all the benefits which You have bestowed upon me.

Your faith will not murder your humility. Your humility will not stab at your faiththe two will go hand in hand to Heaven like a brave brother and a fair sisterthe one bold as a lionthe other meek as a dove. The one rejoicing in Jesusthe other blushing at self. Blessed pair, gladly would I entertain you in my heart all the days of my pilgrimage on earth!

I have thus, as best I could, brought before you the example of the centurion with a few incidental lessons. Now for the APPLICATION, with as much earnestness and brevity as we can summon. The application shall be to three sorts of people. First, we speak to distressed minds deeply conscious of their unworthiness. Jesus Christ is able and willing to save you this very morning! What is the form of your distress? Is it that your sins are great? Believe, I charge you, and may God the Holy Spirit help youbelieve that all your sins Christ can pardon now! Do you see Him upon yonder Cross? He is Divine, but how He bleeds! He is Divine, but how He groans! He smarts! He dies!

Do you believe that any sin is too great for those sufferings to put away? Do you think the Son of God offered an inadequate Atonement? An Atonement of which you can say there is a limit to its efficacy beyond which it cannot operate for the salvation of Believers, so that after all, sin is greater than the sacrifice, and the filth is more full of defilement than the blood is of purification? O crucify not Christ afresh by doubting the power of the eternal God! My Brothers and Sisters, when in the stillness of the starry night we look up to the orbs of Heaven and remember the marvelous truths which astronomy has revealed to us of the magnificence, the inconceivable majesty of creationif we then reflect that the infinite God who made all these became Man for us, and that as Man He was fastened to the transverse wood and bled to death for uswhy, it will appear to us that if all the stars were crowded with inhabitants and all those inhabitants had, everyone, been rebellious against God and had steeped themselves up to the very throat in scarlet crimes, there must be efficacy enough in the blood of such a One as God Himself Incarnate to take all their sins away!

For this great miracle of miraclesGod Himself paying honor to His own justice by suffering a substitutionary deathis an exhibition of infinite severity and love which far down eternity must appear so glorious as utterly to swallow up the remembrance of creature sin and to put it altogether out of sight! Yes, Sinner, believe that this moment the sins of 50 years can drop from off you, yes, of 70 or 80 yearsthat in an instant, you who are as black as Hell can be pure as Heaven if Jesus says the word! If you believe in Him it is donefor to trust Him is to be clean.

Perhaps, however, your difficulty is to get rid of a hardness of heart. You feel that you cannot repentbut cannot Jesus make you repent by His Spirit? Do you hesitate about that question? See the world a few months ago hard bound with frost, but how daffodil and crocus, and snowdrop have come up above that once frozen soil. See how snow and ice have gone and the genial sun shines! God does it readily with the soft breath of the south wind and the kind sunbeams, and He can do the same in the spiritual world for you. Believe He can, and ask Him now to do it, and you shall find that the rock of ice shall thawthat huge horrible devilish iceberg of a heart of yours shall begin to drip with showers of crystal penitence which God shall accept through His dear Son.

But, perhaps, it is some bad habit which gives you trouble. You have been long in it and can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? You cannot get rid of it! I know you cannot! It is a desperate evil. It drags you downward like the hands of demons pulling you from the surface of lifes stream down into its black and horrid depths of death and defilement. Ah, I know your dreads and despairs, but Man, I ask you, cannot Jesus deliver? He has the key of your heart and He can turn it so that all its wheels shall revolve otherwise than now. He who shakes the earth with earthquakes, who sweeps the seas with tornados, can send a heartquake and a storm of strong repentance, and tear up your old habits by the roots! He whose every act is wonderful can surely do what He will within this, the little world of your soul, since in the great world outside He rules as He pleases. Believe in His power and ask Him to prove it. He has but to say, in a word, and this matter of present distress shall be taken away.

Still I hear you say, I cannot. A horrible inability hangs over you. But it is not what you can do or cannot dothese have nothing to do with it it is what Jesus can do! Can there be anything too hard for the Lord? Can the Eternal Spirit ever be defeated when He wills to conquer in a man? Can He who bears the earths huge pillars up, and spreads the heavens abroad, who once was crucified, but who now ever livescan He fail? Put your care into His hands, poor unable wretch, and ask Him to do for you what you cannot do for yourselfand according to your faith so shall it be unto you.

A second application of our subject shall be made to the patient workers who are ready to faint. I know that in this house there are many who incessantly plead with God for their unconverted relatives and neighbors that they may be saved. You have pleaded long for your husband, or your son, or your daughterbut they have gone yet further into sin. Instead of answers to prayer, it seems as though Heaven laughed at your importunity. Take heed of one thingdo not suffer unbelief to make you think that the object of your care cannot be saved! While there is life there is hope. Yes, though they add drunkenness to lust, and blasphemy to drunkenness, and hardness of heart and impenitence to blasphemy, Jesus has but to say the word and they shall be turned, every one, from his evil way.

Under the use of the means of Divine Grace it may be done, or even without the means it may be done. There have been men at work, or at their amusementsall in their wickednesswho have had impressions which have made them new men when it was least expected such a thing would occur! And those who have been the ringleaders in Satans rebellious crew have frequently become the boldest captains in the army of Christ! There is no room for doubt as to the possibility of the salvation of anybody when Jesus gives the word of command. You are unchristian when you shut out the harlot from hopewhen you exclude the thief from repentance or when you even despair of the murdererfor the big heart of God is greater than all your hearts put together! And the great thoughts of the loving Father are not as your thoughts when they climb the highest, neither are His ways your ways when they are at their utmost liberality.

Oh, if your friend, your child, your wife, your husband, is a very devil incarnateor if there are seven devils, or a legion of devils within him, while Christ lives never mutter the word, despairfor He can cast out the legion of evil spirits and impart His Holy Spirit instead! Therefore have faith. You are unworthy to receive the blessing, but have faith in Him who is so able to bestow it. Many of you are going to your classes this afternoon. Others of you will be engaged this evening in preaching the Gospel, and you are getting very faint-hearted because you do not see the success you so much desire. Well, perhaps it is good for you to feel how little you can do apart from Divine ministrations. May this humiliation of soul continuebut do not let it degenerate into a distrust of Him.

If Christ were dead and buried, and had never risen, it were a horrible case for us poor preachers! But while Christ lives endowed with the residue of the eternal Spirit which He freely gives, we ought not so much as fear, much less despair. May the Church of God pluck up heart and feel that with a living Christ in the midst of her armies, victory shall before long wait upon her banners.

The last application I shall make is the same as the second, only on a wider scale. There are many who are like watchers who have grown weary. We have heard that Christ comesthe great coming Manand the Lord knows right well that there is pressing need for someone to come, for this poor old machine of a world creaks dreadfully and seems as though it were so laden with the sheaves of human sin that its axles would snap. Gods infinite longsuffering has kept a crazy world from utter dissolution by a thousand helps and stays, but it is poor work, and seems to get worse and worse. Our state is rotten at the very core, both in business and politics. No man seems to succeed so well as he who has dispensed with his conscience and laughs at principles. All things are come to that point that there is need for some deliverer to come or else I do not know where we shall all go.

And He will come, so the promise stands, and to those who wait for Him, His coming shall be as the beams of the day-star proclaiming the dawn. He is coming and at His coming there shall be a glorious time, a millennium, a period of light, and truth, and joy, and holiness, and peace! We are watching and waiting for it. But we say, Ah, it is hopeless to think of converting the world! How is the Truth to be preached? Where are the tongues to speak it? How few proclaim it boldly! Where are the men to carry Christs Cross to the utmost bounds of the globe and conquer nations for Him? Ah, say not in your heart, the former days were better than now. Write not a book of lamentation and say, The Prophets, where are they? And the Apostles have gone and all the mighty confessors who lived and died for Christ have disappeared.

At the lifting of His finger the Lord can raise up a thousand Jonahs for every city throughout the land! A thousand bold Isaiahs to declare His glory. He has but to bid it and companies of Apostles and armies of martyrs shall start up from the quiet nooks of old Englands villages, or shall pour forth from the workshops of her cities. He can do wonders when He wills it! The worst plight of the Church is but the time when her flood has ebbed in order that it may return in the fullness of its strength! Have confidence, for even should the instruments fail and the ministry become a dead and effete thing, yet His coming shall accomplish His purposes. And when He appears, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

Jesus is not under authority. He has soldiers under Him and He has but to say to this spirit or to that, Go, or Come, and His will shall be done. He has but to quicken His Church by is Holy Spirit, and say, Do this, and the impossible task shall be accomplished. What seems beyond all human skill or mortal hope shall be worked, and worked at once! When He says, Do, it shall be done, and His name shall be praised! O for more faith and more self-abasementtwin angels to abide in this assembly evermore! Go forth with us to battle and return with us from the victory! O Lord, the lover of humility, and the Author of faith, give us to be steeped in both for Jesus sake. Amen.

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YOUNG MAN, IS THIS FOR YOU?   
NO. 2003

**DELIVERED ON LORDS DAY MORNING, JANUARY 15, 1888, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And it came to pass the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him and much people. Now when He came near to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother and she was a widow:   
and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said unto her, Weep not. And He came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And He said, Young man I say unto you, Arise.   
And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother.   
And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God has visited His people. And this rumor of Him went forth throughout all Judea and throughout all the region round about.   
Luke 7:11-17.**

BEHOLD, dear Brethren, the overflowing, ever-flowing power of our Lord Jesus Christ! He had worked a great work upon the centurions servant, and now, only a day after, he raises the dead. It came to pass the day after, that He went into a city called Nain. Day unto day utters speech concerning His deeds of goodness. Did He save your friend yesterday? His fullness is the same. If you seek Him, His love and grace will flow to you today. He blesses this day and He blesses the day after. Never is our Divine Lord compelled to pause until He has recruited His resources. Virtue goes out of Him forever. These thousands of years have not diminished the greatness of His power to bless.

Behold, also, the readiness and naturalness of the outgoings of His lifegiving power. Our Savior was journeying and He works miracles while on the roadHe went into a city called Nain. It was incidentally, (some would say accidentally), that He met the funeral procession. But at once He restored to life this dead young man. Our blessed Lord was not standing still, as one professionally called inHe does not seem to have come to Nain at anyones request for the display of His love. But He was passing through the gate into the city for some reason which is not recorded.

See, my Brethren, how the Lord Jesus is always ready to save! He healed the woman who touched him in the throng when He was on the road to quite another persons house. The mere spilling and droppings of the Lords cup of grace are marvelous. Here He gives life to the dead when He is en route. He scatters His mercy by the roadside and anywhere and everywhere His paths drop fatness. No time, no place can find Jesus unwilling or unable. When Baal is on a journey, or sleeps, his deluded worshippers cannot hope for his help. But when Jesus journeys or sleeps, a

word will find Him ready to conquer death, or quell the tempest.

It was a remarkable incident, this meeting of the two processions at the gates of Nain. If someone with a fine imagination could picture it, what an opportunity he would have for developing his poetical genius! I venture on no such effort. Yonder a procession descends from the city. Our spiritual eyes see death upon the pale horse coming forth from the city gate with great exultation. He has taken another captive. Upon that bier behold the spoils of the dread conqueror! Mourners, by their tears, confess the victory of death. Like a general riding in triumph to the Roman capitol, death bears his spoils to the tomb. What shall hinder him?

Suddenly the procession is arrested by anothera company of disciples and much people are coming up the hill. We need not look at the company but we may fix our eyes upon One who stands in the center, a Man in whom lowliness was always evident and yet majesty was never wanting. It is the living Lord, even He who only has immortality and in Him death has now met his destroyer. The battle is short and decisiveno blows are struckfor death has already done his utmost. With a finger the chariot of death is arrestedwith a word the spoil is taken from the mighty and the lawful captive is delivered.

Death flies defeated from the gates of the city, while Tabor and Hermon, which both looked down upon the scene, rejoice in the name of the Lord. This was a rehearsal upon a small scale of that which shall happen byand-by, when those who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and livethen shall the last enemy be destroyed. Only let death come into contact with Him who is our life and it is compelled to relax its hold. Whatever may be the spoil which it has captured, soon shall our Lord come in His glory and then before the gates of the New Jerusalem we shall see the miracle at the gates of Nain multiplied a myriad times.

Thus, you see, our subject would naturally conduct us to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which is one of the foundation stones of our most holy faith. That grand Truth of God I have often declared to you and will do so again and again. But at this time I have selected my text for a very practical purpose. It concerns the souls of some for whom I am greatly anxious. The narrative before us records a fact, a literal factbut the record may be used for spiritual instruction. All our Lords miracles were intended to be parablesthey were intended to instruct as well as to impressthey are sermons to the eyes, just as His spoken discourses were sermons to the ears. We see here how Jesus can deal with spiritual death. And how He can impart spiritual life at His pleasure. Oh, that we may see this done this morning in the midst of this great assembly!

I. I shall ask you first, dear Friends, to reflect that THE SPIRITUALLY DEAD CAUSE GREAT GRIEF TO THEIR GRACIOUS FRIENDS. If an ungodly man is favored to have Christian relatives, he causes them much anxiety. As a natural fact, this dead young man, who was being carried out to his burial, caused his mothers heart to burst with grief. She showed by her tears that her heart was overflowing with sorrow. The Savior said to her, Weep not, because He saw how deeply she was troubled. Many of my dear young friends may be deeply thankful that they have friends who are grieving over them. It is a sad thing that your conduct should grieve thembut it is a hopeful circumstance for you that you have those around you who do thus grieve.

If all approved of your evil ways, you would, no doubt, continue in them and go speedily to destruction. But it is a blessing that arresting voices do at least a little hinder you. Besides, it may yet be that our Lord will listen to the silent oratory of your mothers tears and that this morning He may bless you for her sake. See how the Evangelist puts itWhen the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said unto her, Weep not. And then He said to the young man, Arise.

Many young persons who are in some respects amiable and hopeful, nevertheless, being spiritually dead, are causing great sorrow to those who love them most. It would perhaps be honest to say that they do not intend to inflict all this sorrow. Indeed, they think it quite unnecessary. Yet they are a daily burden to those whom they love. Their conduct is such that when it is thought over in the silence of their mothers chamber, she cannot help but weep. Her son went with her to the House of God when he was a boy, but now he finds his pleasure in a very different quarter.

Being beyond all control now, the young man does not choose to go with his mother. She would not wish to deprive him of his liberty, but she laments that he exercises that liberty so unwisely. She mourns that he has not the inclination to hear the Word of the Lord and become a servant of his mothers God. She had hoped that he would follow in his fathers footsteps and unite with the people of God. But he takes quite the opposite course. She has seen a good deal about him lately which has deepened her anxietyhe is forming companionships and other connections which are sadly harmful to him. He has a distaste for the quietude of home and he has been exhibiting to his mother a spirit which wounds her.

It may be that what he has said and done is not meant to be unkind. But it is very grievous to the heart which watches over him so tenderly. She sees a growing indifference to everything that is good and an unconcealed intention to see the vicious side of life. She knows a little and fears more as to his present state and she dreads that he will go from one sin to another till he ruins himself for this life and the next. O Friends, it is to a gracious heart a very great grief to have an unconverted child. And yet more so if that child is a mothers boy, her only boy, and she a desolate woman, from whom her husband has been snatched away.

To see spiritual death rampant in one so dear is a sore sorrow which causes many a mother to mourn in secret and pour out her soul before God. Many a Hannah has become a woman of a sorrowful spirit through her own child. How sad that he who should have made her the most glad among women has filled her life with bitterness! Many a mother has had to grieve over her son as almost to cry, Would God he had never been born! It is so in thousands of cases. If it is so in your case, dear Friend,

take home my words to yourself and reflect upon them.

The cause of grief lies herewe mourn that they should be in such a case. In the story before us the mother wept because her son was dead. And we sorrow because our young friends are spiritually dead. There is a life infinitely higher than the life which quickens our material bodies. And oh, that all of you knew it! You who are unrenewed do not know anything about this true life. Oh, how we wish you did! It seems to us a dreadful thing that you should be dead to God, dead to Christ, dead to the Holy Spirit. It is sad, indeed, that you should be dead to those Divine Truths which are the delight and strength of our soulsdead to those holy motives which keep us back from evil and spur us on to virtue.

Dead to those sacred joys which often bring us very near the gates of Heaven. We cannot look at a dead man and feel joy in him, whoever he may bea corpse, however delicately dressed, is a sad sight. We cannot look upon you, you poor dead souls, without crying out, O God, shall it always be so? Shall not these dry bones live? Will You not quicken them? The Apostle speaks of one who lived in pleasure and he said of her, She is dead while she lives. Numbers of persons are dead in reference to all that is true and noble and most Divine. And yet in other respects they are full of life and activity. Oh, to think that they should be dead to God and yet so full of happiness and energy! Marvel not that we grieve about them.

We also mourn because we lose the help and comfort which they ought to bring us. This widowed mother no doubt mourned her boy not only because he was dead but because in him she had lost her earthly stay. She must have regarded him as the staff of her age and the comfort of her loneliness. She was a widowI question if anybody but a widow understands the full sorrow of that word. We may put ourselves by sympathy into the position of one who has lost her other self, the partner of her life. But the most tender sympathy cannot fully realize the actual cleavage of bereavement and the desolation of loves loss. She was a widowthe sentence sounds like a knell.

Still, if the sun of her life was gone, there was a star shining. She had a boy, a dear boy, who promised her great comfort. He would, no doubt, supply her necessities and cheer her loneliness and in him her husband would live again and his name would remain among the living in Israel. She could lean on him as she went to the synagogue. She would have him to come home from his work at evening and keep the little home together and cheer her hearth. Alas, that star is swallowed up in the darkness. He is dead and today he is carried to the cemetery.

It is the same spiritually with us in reference to our unconverted friends. With regard to you that are dead in sin we feel that we miss the aid and comfort which we ought to receive from you in our service of the living God. We want fresh laborers in all sorts of placesin our Sunday school work, our mission among the masses and in all manner of service for the Lord we love! Ours is a gigantic burden and we long for our sons to put their shoulders to it. We looked forward to seeing you grow up in the fear of God and stand side by side with us in the great warfare against evil and in holy labor for the Lord Jesus.

But you cannot help us, for you are yourselves on the wrong side. Alas, alas, you hinder us by causing the world to say, See how those young men are acting! We have to spend thought and prayer and effort over you which might usefully have gone forth for others. Our care for yonder great dark world which lies all around us is very pressing but you do not share it with usmen are perishing from lack of knowledge and you do not help us in endeavoring to enlighten them.

A further grief is that we can have no fellowship with them. The mother at Nain could have no communion with her dear son now that he was dead, for the dead know not anything. He can never speak to her, nor she to him, for he is on the bier, a dead man carried out. O my Friends, certain of you have dear ones whom you love and they love you. But they cannot hold any spiritual communion with you, nor you with them. You never bow the knee together in private prayer, nor mingle heart with heart in the appeal of faith to God as to the cares which prowl around your home. O young man, when your mothers heart leaps for joy because of the love of Christ shed abroad in her soul, you cannot understand her joy. Her feelings are a mystery to you.

If you are a dutiful son, you do not say anything disrespectful about her religion. But yet you cannot sympathize in its sorrows or its joys. Between your mother and you there is upon the best things a gulf as wide as if you were actually dead on the bier and she stood weeping over your corpse. I remember, in the hour of overwhelming anguish when I feared that my beloved wife was about to be taken from me, how I was comforted by the loving prayers of my two dear sonswe had communion not only in our grief but in our confidence in the living God. We knelt together and poured out our hearts unto God and we were comforted.

How I blessed God that I had in my children such sweet support! But suppose they had been ungodly young men? I should have looked in vain for holy fellowship and for aid at the Throne of Grace. Alas, in many a household the mother cannot have communion with her own son or daughter on that point which is most vital and enduring because they are spiritually deadwhile she has been quickened into newness of life by the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, spiritual death soon produces manifest causes for sorrow. In the narrative before us the time had come when her sons body must be buried. She could not wish to have that dead form longer in the home with her. It is a token to us of the terrible power of death that it conquers love with regard to the body. Abraham loved his Sarah. But after a while he had to say to the sons of Heth, Give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. It happens in some mournful cases that character becomes so bad that no comfort in life can be enjoyed while the erring one is within the home circle.

We have known parents who have felt that they could not have their son at home so drunken, so debauched had he become. Not always wisely, yet sometimes almost of necessity, the plan has been tried of sending

the incorrigible youth to a distant colony in the hope that when removed from pernicious influences he might do better. How seldom so deplorable an experiment succeeds! I have known mothers who could not think of their sons without feeling pangs far more bitter than those they endured at their birth. Woe, woe to him who causes such heartbreak! What an awful thing it is when loves best hopes gradually die down into despair and loving desires at last put on mourning and turn from prayers of hope to tears of regret!

Words of admonition call forth such passion and blasphemy that prudence almost silences them. Then have we before us the dead young man carried out to his grave. A sorrowful voice sobs out, He is given unto idols, let him alone. Am I addressing one whose life is now preying upon the tender heart of her that brought him forth? Do I speak to one whose outward conduct has at last become so avowedly wicked that he is a daily death to those who gave him life? O young man, can you bear to think of this? Are you turned to stone? I cannot yet believe that you contemplate your parents heartbreak without bitter feelings. God forbid that you should!

We also mourn because of the future of men dead in sin. This mother, whose son had already gone so far in death that he must be buried out of sight, had the further knowledge that something worse would befall him in the sepulcher to which he was being carried. It was impossible for her to think calmly of the corruption which surely follows at the heels of death. When we think of what will become of you who refuse the Lord Christ we are appalled. After death the judgment. We could more readily go into details as to a putrid corpse than we could survey the state of a soul lost forever. We dare not linger at the mouth of Hell. But we are forced to remind you that there is a place, where their worm dies not and the fire is not quenched.

There is a place where those must abide who are driven from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. It is an unendurable thought that you should be, cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. I do not wonder that those who are not honest with you are afraid to tell you so and that you try yourself to doubt it. But with the Bible in your hand and a conscience in your bosom you cannot but fear the worst if you remain apart from Jesus and the life He freely gives. If you continue as you are and persevere in your sin and unbelief to the end of life, there is no help for you but that you must be condemned in the Day of Judgment.

The most solemn declarations of the Word of God assure you that, he that believes not shall be damned. It is heartbreaking work to think that this should be the case with any of you. You prattled at your mothers knee and kissed her cheek with rapturous lovewhy, then, will you be divided from her forever? Your father hoped that you would take his place in the Church of Godhow is it that you do not even care to follow him to Heaven? Remember, the day comes when, one shall be taken, and the other left. Do you renounce all hope of being with your wife, your sister, your mother at the right hand of God? You cannot wish them to go down to Hell with youhave you no desire to go to Heaven with them?

Come, you blessed, will be the voice of Jesus to those who imitated their gracious Savior. And Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, must be the sentence upon all who refuse to be made like the Lord. Why will you take your part and lot with accursed ones? I do not know whether you find it easy to hear me this morning. I find it very hard to speak to you because my lips are not able to express my hearts feelings. Oh that I had the forceful utterance of an Isaiah, or the passionate lamentations of a Jeremiah with which to arouse your affections and your fears! Still, the Holy Spirit can use even me, and I beseech Him so to do. But I have said enough on this point. I am sure you see that the spiritually dead cause great grief to those of their family who are spiritually alive.

II. Now let me cheer you while I introduce the second head of my discourse, which is thisFOR SUCH GRIEF THERE IS ONLY ONE HELPERBUT THERE IS A HELPER.

This young man is taken out to be buried. But our Lord Jesus Christ met the funeral procession. Carefully note the coincidences, as skeptics call them but as we call themProvidencesof Scripture. This is a fine subject for another time. Take this one case. How came it that the young man died just then? How came it that this exact hour was selected for his burial? Perhaps because it was evening. But even that might not fix the precise moment. Why did the Savior that day arrange to travel five-andtwenty miles, so as to arrive at Nain in the evening? How came it to pass that He happened just then to be coming from a quarter which naturally led Him to enter at that particular gate from which the dead would be carried?

See, He ascends the hill to the little city at the same moment when the head of the procession is coming out of the gate! He meets the dead man before the place of sepulture is reached. A little later and he would have been buried. A little earlier and he would have been at home lying in the darkened room and no one might have called the Lords attention to him. The Lord knows how to arrange all thingsHis forecasts are true to the tick of the clock. I hope some great purpose is to be fulfilled this morning. I do not know why you, my Friend, came in here on a day when I am discoursing on this particular subject. You did not think to come, perhaps, but here you are. And Jesus has come here, too. He has come here on purpose to meet you and quicken you to newness of life. There is no chance about iteternal decrees have arranged it all and we shall soon see that it is so. You spiritually dead are being met by Him in whom is life eternal.

The blessed Savior saw all at a glance. Out of that procession He singled out the chief mourner and read her inmost heart. He was always tender to mothers. He fixed His eye on that widow. For He knew that she was such, without being informed of the fact. The dead man is her only son

He perceives all the details and nothing is hid from His infinite mind. O young man, Jesus knows all about you. Jesus, who is invisibly present this morning, fixes His eyes on you at this moment. He has seen the tears of those who have wept for you. He sees that some of them despair of you, and are in their great grief acting like mourners at your funeral.

Jesus saw it all and, what was more, entered into it all. Oh, how we ought to love our Lord that He takes such notice of our griefs and especially our spiritual griefs about the souls of others! You, dear Teacher, want your class savedJesus sympathizes with you. You, dear Friend, have been very earnest to win souls, Know that in all this you are workers together with God. Jesus knows all about our travail of soul and He is at one with us therein. Our travail is only His own travail rehearsed in us, according to our humble measure. When Jesus enters into our work it cannot fail. Enter, O Lord, into my work at this hour, I pray You, and bless this feeble word to my hearers! I know that hundreds of Believers are saying, Amen. How this cheers me!

Our Lord proved how He entered into the sorrowful state of things by first saying to the widow, Weep not. At this moment He says to you who are praying and agonizing for souls, Do not despair! Sorrow not as those who are without hope! I mean to bless you. You shall yet rejoice over life given to the dead. Let us take heart and dismiss all unbelieving fear. Our Lord then went to the bier and just laid His finger upon it and they that carried it stood still of their own accord. Our Lord has a way of making bearers stand still without a word. Perhaps, today, yonder young man is being carried further into sin by the four bearers of his natural passions, his infidelity, his bad company, and his love of strong drink. It may be that pleasure and pride, willfulness and wickedness are bearing the four corners of the bier. But our Lord can, by His mysterious power, make the bearers stand still. Evil influences have become powerless, the man knows not how.

When they stood quite still, there was a hush. The disciples stood around the Lord, the mourners surrounded the widow and the two crowds faced each other. There was a little space and Jesus and the dead man were in the center. The widow pushed away her veil and gazing through her tears wondered what was going on. The Jews who came out of the city halted as the bearers had done. Hush! Hush! What will HE do? In that deep silence the Lord heard the unspoken prayers of that widow woman. I doubt not that her soul began to whisper, half in hope and half in fear Oh, that He would raise my son!

At any rate, Jesus heard the flutter of the wings of desire if not of faith. Surely her eyes were speaking as she gazed on Jesus, who had so suddenly appeared. Here let us be as quiet as the scene before us. Let us be hushed for a minute and pray God to raise dead souls at this time. [Here followed a pause, much silent prayer and many tears.]

III. That hush was not long, for speedily the Great Quickener entered upon His gracious work. This is our third pointJESUS IS ABLE TO WORK THE MIRACLE OF LIFE-GIVING.

Jesus Christ has life in Himself and He quickens whom He will (John 5:21). Such life is there in Him that he that lives and believes in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live. Our blessed Lord immediately went up to the bier. What lay before Him? It was a corpse. He could derive no aid from that lifeless form. The spectators were sure that he was dead, for they were carrying him out to bury him. No deception was possible, for his own mother believed him dead and you may be sure that if there had been a spark of life in him she would not have given him up to the jaws of the grave. There was then no hopeno hope from the dead man, no hope from anyone in the crowd either of bearers or of disciples. They were all powerless alike.

Even so, you, O Sinner, cannot save yourselfneither can any of us or can any of us save you. There is no help for you, dead Sinner, beneath yon skies. No help in yourself or in those who love you most. But, lo, the Lord has laid help on One that is mighty. If Jesus wants the least help, you cannot render it, for you are dead in sins. There you lie, dead on the bier and nothing but the sovereign power of Divine omnipotence can put heavenly life into you. Your help must come from above.

While the bier stood still, Jesus spoke to the dead young man, spoke to him personallyYoung man, I say unto you, Arise. O Master, personally speak to some young man this morning. Or, if You will, speak to the old, or speak to a woman. But speak the Word home to them. We mind not where the Lords voice may fall. Oh that it would now call those around me, for I feel that there are dead ones all over the building! I stand with biers all about me and dead ones on them. Lord Jesus, are You not here? What is wanted is Your personal call. Speak, Lord, we beseech You!

Young man, said He, Arise. And He spoke as if the man had been alive. This is the Gospel way. He did not wait till He saw signs of life before He bade him rise. But to the dead man He said, Arise. This is the model of Gospel preachingin the name of the Lord Jesus, His commissioned servants speak to the dead as if they were alive. Some of my Brethren laugh at this and say that it is inconsistent and foolish. But all through the New Testament it is even so. There we read, Arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light. I do not attempt to justify it. It is more than enough for me that so I read the Word of God. We are to bid men believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, even though we know that they are dead in sin and that faith is the work of the Spirit of God.

Our faith enables us, in Gods name, to command dead men to live and they do live. We bid unbelieving man believe in Jesus and power goes with the Word and Gods elect do believe. It is by this Word of faith which we preach that the voice of Jesus sounds out to men. The young man who could not rise, for he was dead, nevertheless did rise when Jesus bade him. Even so, when the Lord speaks by His servants the Gospel command, Believe and live, it is obeyed and men live.

But the Savior, you observe, spoke with His own authorityYoung man, I say unto you, Arise. Neither Elijah nor Elisha could thus have spoken. But He who spoke thus was very God of very God. Though veiled in human flesh and clothed in lowliness, He was that same God who

said, Let there be light and there was light. If any of us are able by faith to say, Young man, Arise, we can only say it in His namewe have no authority but what we derive from Him. Young man, the voice of Jesus can do what your mother cannot. How often has her sweet voice wooed you to come to Jesus but wooed in vain? Oh, that the Lord Jesus would inwardly speak to you! Oh, that He would say, Young man, Arise.

I trust that while I am speaking, the Lord is silently speaking in your hearts by His Holy Spirit. I feel sure that it is even so. If so, within you a gentle movement of the Spirit is inclining you to repent and yield your heart to Jesus. This shall be a blessed day to the spiritually dead young man, if now he accepts his Savior, and yields himself up to be renewed by Divine Grace! No, my poor Brother, they shall not bury you! I know you have been very bad and they may well despair of you. But while Jesus lives we cannot give you up.

The miracle was worked straightwayfor this young man, to the astonishment of all about him, sat up. His was a desperate case but death was conquered, for he sat up. He had been called back from the innermost dungeon of death, even from the graves mouth. But he sat up when Jesus called him. It did not take a month, nor a week, nor an hourno, not even five minutes. Jesus said, Young man, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. In an instant the Lord can save a sinner. Before the words I speak can have more than entered your ear, the Divine flash which gives you eternal life can have penetrated your breast and you shall be a new creature in Jesus Christ, beginning to live in newness of life from this hourno more to feel spiritually deador to return to your old corruption.

New life, new feeling, new love, new hopes, new company shall be yours, because you have passed from death unto life. Pray God that it may be so, for He will hear us.

IV. Our time has gone and although we have a wide subject we may not linger. I must close by noticing that THIS WILL PRODUCE VERY GREAT RESULTS. To give life to the dead is no little matter.

The great result was manifest, first, in the young man. Would you like to see him as he was? Might I venture to draw back the sheet from his face? See there what death has done? He was a fine young man. To his mothers eye he was the mirror of manhood! What a pallor is on that face! How sunken are the eyes! You are feeling sad. I see you cannot bear the sight. Come, look into this grave where corruption has gone further in its work. Cover him up! We cannot bear to look at the decaying body! But when Jesus Christ has said, Arise, what a change takes place!

Now you may look at him. His blue eyes have the light of Heaven in them. His lips are coral red with life. His brow is fair and full of thought. Look at his healthy complexion, in which the rose and the lily sweetly contend for mastery! What a fresh look there is about him, as of the dew of the morning! He has been dead but he lives, and no trace of death is on him. While you are looking at him he begins to speak. What music for his mothers ear! What did he say? Why, that I cannot tell you. Speak yourself as a newly-quickened one and then I shall hear what you say.

I know what I said. I think the first word I said when I was quickened was, Hallelujah. Afterwards, I went home to my mother and told her that the Lord had met with me. No words are given here. It does not quite matter what those words are, for any words proved him to be alive. If you know the Lord, I believe you will speak of heavenly things. I do not believe that our Lord Jesus has a dumb child in His housethey all speak to Him and most of them speak of Him. The new birth reveals itself in confession of Christ and praise of Christ. I warrant you that his mother, when she heard him speak, did not criticize what he said. She did not say, That sentence is ungrammatical.

She was too glad to hear him speak at all, that she did not examine all the expressions which he used. Newly-saved souls often talk in a way which after years and experience will not justify. You often hear it said of a revival meeting that there was a good deal of excitement and certain young converts talked absurdly. That is very likelybut if genuine grace was in their souls and they bore witness to the Lord Jesus, I, for one, would not criticize them very severely. Be glad if you can see any proof that they are born again and mark well their future lives. To the young man himself a new life had begunlife from among the dead.

A new life also had begun in reference to his mother. What a great result for her was the raising of her dead son! Henceforth he would be doubly dear. Jesus helped him down from the bier and delivered him to his mother. We have not the words He used. But we are sure that He made the presentation most gracefully, giving back the son to the mother as one presents a choice gift. With a majestic delight which always goes with His condescending benevolence, He looked on that happy woman and His glance was brighter to her than the light of the morning, as He said to her, Receive your son.

The thrill of her heart was such as she would never forget. Observe carefully that our Lord, when He puts the new life into young men, does not want to take them away with Him from the home where their first duty lies. Here and there one is called away to be an Apostle or a missionarybut usually He wants them to go home to their friends and bless their parents and make their families happy and holy. He does not present the young man to the priest but He delivers him to his mother. Do not say, I am converted and therefore I cannot go to business any more, or try to support my mother by my trade. That would prove that you were not converted at all.

You may go for a missionary in a year or twos time if you are fitted for it. But you must not make a dash at a matter for which you are not prepared. For the present, go home to your mother and make your home happy and charm your fathers heart and be a blessing to your brothers and sisters and let them rejoice because, he was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found.   
What was the next result? Well, all the neighbors feared and glorified

God. If yonder young man who last night was at the music-hall and a few nights ago came home very nearly drunk. If that young man is born again, all around him will wonder at it. If that young man who has got himself out of a situation by gambling, or some other wrong-doing, is saved, we shall all feel that God is very near us. If that young man who has begun to associate with evil women and to fall into other evils, is brought to be pure-minded and gracious, it will strike awe into those round about him. He has led many others astray and if the Lord now leads him back it will make a great hubbub and men will enquire as to the reason of the change and will see that there is a power in religion alter all.

Conversions are miracles which never cease. These prodigies of power in the moral world are quite as remarkable as prodigies in the material world. We want conversion, so practical, so real, so Divinethat those who doubt will not be able to doubtbecause they see in them the hand of God.

Finally, note that it not only surprised the neighbors and impressed them but the rumor of it went everywhere. Who can tell? If a convert is made this morning, the result of that conversion may be felt for thousands of years, if the world stands so long. Yes, it shall be felt when a thousand, thousand years have passed away, even throughout eternity. Tremblingly have I dropped a smooth stone into the lake this morning. It has fallen from a feeble hand and from an earnest heart. Your tears have shown that the waters are stirred. I perceive the first circlet upon the surface.

Other and wider circles will follow as the sermon is spoken of and read. When you go home and tell what God has done for your soul, there will be a wider ring. And if it should happen that the Lord should open the mouth of one of this mornings converts to preach His Word, then no one can tell how wide the circle will become. Ring upon ring will the Word spread itself, until the shoreless ocean of eternity shall feel the influence of this mornings Word. No, I am not dreaming. According to our faith so shall it be. Grace this day bestowed by the Lord upon one single soul may affect the whole mass of humanity.

God grant His blessing, even life forevermore. Pray much for a Blessing, my dear Friends, I beseech you, for Jesus Christs sake. And pray much for me. Amen.

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THE VERY FRIEND YOU NEED   
NO. 2484

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1896.   
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 22, 1886.

**A friend of publicans and sinners.   
Luke 7:34.**

THIS title was given to our Divine Lord and Master by those who were disposed to quibble at Him and were unwilling to be convinced that He was the Messiah. John the Baptists self-denial was pushed much too far for them. They could not understand a man wearing a garment of camels hair, with a leather belt about his loins and whose food was locusts and wild honey. The man was either too good for this world, or he was not in his right mind. He has a devil, they said, as they turned away from him. But they could not say this of the Savior, for He ate and drank as others ate and drank, and made no difficulty at all about meats and drinksso they said of HimHe is a gluttonous Man and a winebibbera friend of publicans and sinners. Thus our text comes to us as the language of certain gentry who said, even of the Savior, that they could not listen to Him because He seemed to be a Man who went in and out with ordinary people and did not distinguish Himself by being an ascetic.

I also heard a man say, some time ago, that he could not listen to a certain preacher because, unhappily for him, he happened to be very stouthe could profit by the ministry of a man who was very thin, for the objector thought he looked more saintly! Well, it may be so with some people, but, for my part, if anybody can do me good, whether he is stout or thin, I shall make no question about that matter! Whether he is an inch or two shorter or taller will not be a question for me to consider. I think that I should never refrain from consulting with an eminent physician because he happened to have black hair, or light hair, or any peculiarity of that kind! Yet people are often so indifferent about their soul affairs that the littlest trifle in a service, the tiniest accidental thing will often keep them from listening to the most weighty Truths of God that concern their immortal interests!

Now let us come to this title of our Master. They called Him, a friend of publicans and sinners. It is somewhat noticeable that He quotes this saying Himself. Probably neither Matthew, nor Mark, nor Luke, nor John would have told us that they called Jesus, a friend of publicans and sinners if He had not repeated it, Himself. It is clear from this fact that He was not in the least ashamed of the title! He repeats it almost as if He enjoyed it, as if He took the title home to Himself and wore it as some distinction which He was glad to have! He, Himself, says it and He takes care to say it again and to bid both Matthew and Luke record it, that He was called, a friend of publicans and sinners. What He was not ashamed to repeat, we are not ashamed to think of at this service! So, first of all, let us notice that this saying, in the sense in which they meant it, was not true. But, secondly, in a higher and better sense than they understood it, it was true. When we have thought over these two points, we will, in the third place, ask one another, Since it is true that Christ is a friend of publicans and sinners, what then?

I. First, then, IN THE SENSE IN WHICH THEY MEANT IT, THIS SAYING WAS NOT TRUE.   
The Lord Jesus Christ was not a friend of publicans and sinners in the sense of being in the least like them. Our proverb says, A man is known by the company he keeps, but you could not have known the Lord Jesus Christ by the company He kept. It would be strictly true to say of Him that He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinnersthat even when He was present with them and received them, and ate with themyet still there was a grave distinction between Him and them so that you could never consider Him to be of the same class with them. No, Brothers and Sisters, His bitterest enemies could not truly lay any sin to His charge! They had to hire false witnesses to make up an accusation against Him and when they had made it up, there was really nothing in it. The quick-eyed prince of this world, Satan, himself, could find nothing sinful in Him. And the princes of this world, whose eyes, through their malice, had become like the eyes of lynxes, yet could not discover anything for which they could blame Him. He was not like they were. He was not like any sinner, He was not like the drunkard, He was not like the adulterer, He was not like the thief, nor was He in the least like the hypocritical Pharisee who, with all his attempts to appear righteous, was not really like the Savior. So, Christ was not a friend of publicans and sinners in the sense of being like they were.

And, in the second place, He was not a friend of publicans and sinners in the sense of aiding or abetting them in evil. He never said a single word that could encourage any man to sin. He never did a single act by which any man would have said that he was helped to be a transgressor. I do not suppose that any other man ever lived who could be truthfully said to be harmless, for all of us do some harm, even if unconsciously. Our example, either in its defects or in its excesses, must be injurious to somebody. Even those who endeavor to keep their example as pure, clean and worthy of imitation as possible, yet, perhaps, sometimes lose their temper, or occasionally speak unadvisedly with their lips, or, now and then forget what they ought to have remembered and thus incidentally do harm. But our Lord Jesus Christ never did. No one among us here was ever led by the example of Christ to do harm. His example is matchless in this respect that if we copied it as far as it is imitable, we would only have copied perfection and followed on after the highest virtue! There may be some who join with publicans and sinners, so eating and drinking with them as to encourage gluttony and drunkennessso singing and laughing with them as to multiply wantonness and uncleannessbut this could never be said of the Savior. He was not like they were nor did He aid them, so He was not, in that sense, a friend of publicans and sinners.

And, furthermore, He never uttered principles which would encourage persons in sin, or which would help their consciences to be quiet while they indulged their vices. Alas, in modern times there have been some who, even from the pulpit, have taught men that sin is a trifle and, with regard to the future state, they have either denied its existence, or have tried to make it so pleasant to the ungodly that it seems if you followed the preachers leading, you might as well die impenitent as fall asleep a Believer in Jesus! They have either denied that there is any wrath to come, or they have smoothed it over and made the descent to the Pit to be pleasant to men. This is setting a trap to catch mens soulsbut Christ never did that. Such as He loved the sinner, He denounced his sin and proclaimed the judgment to come in words most striking and terrible! Where can you find, in all the books you may readeven in the writings of those mediaeval preachers which are so generally condemned, or in the works of those old-fashioned Puritan preachers who are so sneered at, nowadayswords that equal in their crash of terror the sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ? O Sirs, if you do not care to read the Epistles, read the records of the four Evangelists and note what Jesus said! He never made the way of sin to appear pleasant, nor tried to minimize the dread result of iniquity. No, He was not, in that sense, a friend of publicans and sinners. He was a better friend to them than He would have been if He had acted like that! He dealt more honestly with them and did not smooth their path with flatteries.

And once again, Jesus was not a friend of publicans and sinners in the sense that He ever courted popularity among them. Many of them would have taken Him by force and made Him a king, but He hid Himself from them. They drew near to Him for to hear Him, but He never said a single syllable to pander to their depraved tastes, or to ease them in their consciences while continuing in their sins! He aimed at winning their souls, but not at winning their applause. I heard of one who, at the election, advertised himself as, the friend of the working man. I daresay the working man would find it difficult to discover any particular friendship in him, now that he has become a Member of Parliament! It is very easy to profess to be a friend of anybody when there is something to be gained by it! But our Lord and Savior had nothing to get out of those He met while here on earth. He had everything to give to them and He did give all that He had, yes, and Himself, also! But He never cajoled them, or sought their friendship, that He might win their acclamations. So it was not true that He went about among men trying to ingratiate Himself with the lowest of the low and the vilest of the vile. Nothing of the kind! Christ always stands out before us as the advocate and pattern of everything that is pure, true, right and noble, so that, in the sense intended by these quibblers, He was not a friend of publicans and sinners.

II. But now, dear Friends, I have a much more pleasant matter to speak of when I say that IN A HIGHER AND BETTER SENSE, THIS SAYING WAS TRUE and it is still true that Jesus Christ is a friend of publicans and sinners.

He was, first of all, a most hearty and affectionate friend to guilty men. His whole soul was filled with love to men while they were yet sinners and enemies to Himself. It was this that made Him leave His Fathers court and all the royalties of Heaven to come and be born in a stable, and laid in a mangerand to labor in a carpenters shop and to become the poorest of the poor and the most despised and rejected of men! All this was because He loved men, not only as men, but as

guilty men. Their guilt excited His pity, for He knew the misery which lies concealed behind the apparent pleasure of sin. And to deliver guilty men from the consequences of their sin, He came to live where He could not have a place to lay His head, where, at the last, He did not even have a garment with which to cover His naked body! Our Lord Jesus was a truly sincere, intensely affectionate, earnest Friendnever before or after did any man have a nature so intensely affectionate as had the Lord Jesus Christ! He always seems to me as if He combined in His blessed Person both the sexes of our common humanity, as if He were the perfection of all that can be found in man and woman, tooso tender and so gentle, and yet so strong. The masculine, with all its force, and the feminine, with all its gentleness and sympathy, were united in Christ! He never thought of sinners without love, never looked at them without pity, never heard their cruel words without returning them good wishes, never saw their miseries without being moved with compassion. He was a model of gentleness such as you and I may well desire to imitate, but shall never reach. He was a friend of publicans and sinners in the intense affection of His heart.

You need not wonder, therefore, that I add, in the next place, that He was a friend of publicans and sinners in a very practical manner, for intensity of heart is sure to bring forth fruit. Tell me that you love me and it will come to very little if you only love me in words. But if there is true love, there will be corresponding action, there will be proofs of that affection. Our Savior proved His love to men in His very coming to this earth, as I have already said, but when He was here, He went about doing good. He never was invited to do good to any and refused, however lowlyand, let me add, however polluted they might be, they were always welcome to His benediction. He went about preaching the Gospel which could elevate those who were fallen and comfort those who were despairing and, at the last, He proved His love in the highest conceivable manner. If a good shepherd laid down his life for his sheep and, in doing so, was proved to be good, did not Jesus do so? Let me quote those blessed words of the Apostle Peterthere is more music in them than in all Homers poetry Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree. That we might live, He died! That we might be cleansed from our iniquities, the Lord has laid them all on Him! O Sinners, Christ is, indeed, your Friend, since, by His death, He has already done for you all that Almighty Love could suggest and Omnipotent Love could carry out! Yes, and rising from the grave and mounting to His Throne, He made intercession for the transgressors and He continues to prove His love to sinners by daily pleading for them! The prayer He commenced on earth has never closed, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Oh, yes, He is intensely, deeply affectionate within Himself, but He is abundantly and practically the Friend of sinners by what He does for them! How I wish that some of you would prove this by going to Him, that He might exercise upon you all the matchless skill of His inimitable Grace!

Further, Beloved, I call your attention to this fact, that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Friend of sinners in the wisest possible sense. He is affectionate and practical, but He is also wise. You know that there are several ways of proving yourself a mans friend. There is a man who calls upon one whom he regards as his friend and he says, Friend, I need you to give me some drink. And his friend says to him, There is the bottle take as much as you like. A man who acts like that is only worthy to be called a foe! The poor fellow has another friend upon whom he calls and, to his request, his other friend replies, I cannot give you strong drink, for I believe that it would greatly injure you. I look upon it as a mischievous thing and I am afraid the habit of drinking is growing upon you. Excuse me, but I cannot give it to you. I think you will all agree that this last is much the wiser friend! I know persons to whom, if you go and hint to them what advice you would like them to give you, they will give you that advice, directly. When people come to me to ask for advice, I generally know that they have made up their minds as to the advice I am to give them and, if they find that I advise what they wish, they think me very wise! A wise friend knows that though he might ingratiate himself for a moment by giving congenial advice, yet, by-and-by, when it turns out for evil, he would have done his friend an ill turn and would be blamed for having done so. The wise friend often throws cold water on our plans and says, You are quite wrong, although we would have wished him to have said, You are right.

The Lord Jesus Christ is such a wise Friend that He says to the sinner, Come, Friend, if you would be happy, you must give up that sin. He does not say, I will be your friend and help you through the scrapes into which you have got through your sin. No, says Christ, I will help you out of your sin if you will trust Me, but if you will keep your sin, you will have to smart for it and I will not help you out of that sorrow. He comes to you, my dear Friend, and He says, You want to be happy, but that is not the most important pointyou must first be holy before you can be happy. O Lord Jesus! says the sinner, I want peace. No, says Jesus, you do not need peaceit would be injurious to you to have peace in your present conditionyou must have, first, purity. I must, first of all, show you where you are wrong and set you right. As He does it, sometimes we cry out, It is very rough treatment, Lord! I have known, in cases of surgery, that a patient has been very anxious for the healing of the wound. No, says the skillful surgeon, not yet. There is much proud flesh which must first be taken away. We must not close this wound yet. It must be left open, for there is much that must still come forth from it if we are to have a permanent cure. Thus does the Lord Jesus Christ often deal with sinners. He is their true Friend even when He lays the axe to the root of their tree of self-righteousness and begins to cut it down! He means to make sure work and abiding work, so He bids the sinner renounce his sin, repent of his transgressions and seek that complete change of heart which will produce a radical change of life. Christ is a friend of publicans and sinners in a very wise sense.

And, Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ is a friend of publicans and sinners in a very intense sense. There is an old proverb which says, A friend in need is a friend, indeed. Christ is the Friend of sinners in their time of need. You, Sir, have gone on in profligacy and extravagance till you are brought to beggary. Yet even now you may come to Christ! You have ruined your health by sin, yet you may still come to Christ! Possibly you have even disgraced your character by some overt crime, yet you may come to Christ and Christ will come to you! Oh, but nobody speaks to me! He will speak to you! He will find you alone in your shame and will speak words of saving power to you. Do I address some poor woman who has lost her character and is shunned by everybody? Jesus Christ comes even to you as you stand alone and He says, Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more. The Lord Jesus likes to catch us when we are down at our very lowest. When others say, Now he is down, keep him down, Christ says, Now he is down, up with him!

There is a story told about the Savior. I do not suppose that it is true, but it ought to be, for it is just what might have happened. It is an old tradition that one day, in the streets of Jerusalem, there lay a dead dog and one kicked the body and said that it had the mange. Another kicked it and said, How its bones stick out! What a cur it is! But there came One who stood by this dead dog and said, What white teeth it has! He had spied out the only good thing that could be found in the dead dog and, as He went on His way, the people asked, Who was that? And others answered, It was Jesus of Nazareth. As I have said, I do not suppose that story is true, yet it is just as Christ would have acted and that is the way He does with peopleHe spies out some good thing or other, if there is any in themor if there is no good thing in them, He still loves them till He loves them into goodness! He knows the blessed art of getting hold of people at their worst and then and there putting into them some point of brightness of character which delivers them from being utterly cast away! My blessed Master likes picking sinners off the very dunghills of sin! How many poor captives has He fetched from prisons and set them free! How many has He gathered whom the devil, himself, had cast away as worn-out and good for nothing! These are the very persons that He takes and makes to be His beloved ones, who shall wash His feet with their tears and wipe them with the hairs of their head. Yes, Christ Jesus is a Friend of great intensity for He is a Friend in need.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is also the Friend of sinners for constancy. He is the friend of the sinner when he begins his sin and He checks him. He is the Friend of the sinner when he goes on in his sin and He warns him. He is the Friend of the sinner when he has grown old in sin and still He holds him back. He is the Friend of the sinner when the sinner gets to be, as it were, farthest gone of allnot only ripe, but rotten! Still does Jesus follow himthe wonderful perseverance of Divine Mercy is a theme that may well excite the marvel of angels! O Sirs, I wish you who have gone far into sin could but feel that still, in His pity, He looks upon you and still, in His love, He pursues you! He is, indeed, the Friend of sinners! You wrote sinners in very small letters, once, and then you might have written, friend, in equally small letters. But now you write in large capitalsSINNERS. Oh, what a size the letters would be if they truly described you! But larger than all is that blessed word, FRIEND. As you seem to grow in sin, He seems even more to grow in

friendship and so

you sing to Him *Still does Your good Spirit strive   
With the chief of sinners dwell.*   
Oh, that He would lead you to believe this even now, so that you might   
fly into His arms! He is the Friend of sinners for His constancy. I have nearly exhausted my time, so I can only say, my Lord Jesus is   
the Friend of sinners in the largest conceivable sense. There never was a   
sinner to whom He was not willing to be a Friend! If you, poor Sinner,  
will but seek Him, He will be found of you. In a revival, perhaps, there   
may be hundreds coming to Christdo not think that you will be one too   
many. And in dull times there may seem to be none coming to Christdo   
not think that He will refuse you because you are a lonely one! Where do  
you dwell, my Hearer? Perhaps on some lone moor, or in some far-away   
glen, or out in the bushyet Christ is thereso seek Him in the silence   
of the evening. Or do you work in the midst of the busy city where all is   
noise and turmoil? Yet He will hear you amidst the hum of labor and the   
din of trafficyour whispered prayer will reach His ear and heart

*Jesus sits on Zions hill,*

*And receives poor sinners still,*   
and that at all hours of the night and all moments of the day! If He should refuse you when you go to Him, you will be the first whom He ever refusedand I am sure He will not begin with you! That cannot be, for Jesus said, Come to Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. He also said, Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out. No, that will never be your case nor mine, Beloved, if we come to Him! It is impossible! So let us rejoice that throughout all time, as long as there is a sinner out of Hell, Christ is ready to be that sinners Friend!

III. So I shall close my discourse when I have asked and answered one more question, AS CHRIST IS THE FRIEND OF SINNERS, WHAT THEN?   
Well, first, let us do as the sinners used to do in His time, they drew near to HimThen drew near to Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. There is a great crowd of peoplewhat a dense throng! Who is that in the middle? It is Jesus of Nazareth, the great Messiah Prophet preaching! Who are those gentlemen standing on the edge of the crowd, wearing broad phylacteries, discussing among themselves and sneering at the doctrine that is being taught? Those are the very respectable people who never do anything wrongthe Scribes and Phariseesthe learned men who know all that can possibly be known by anybody! These people always stand at the very outside of the ring. But who are those in the middle of the throng? And, straightway, some Pharisee holds up his hands in disgust and says, It is perfectly shocking! Wherever the Nazarene goes, there is always a pack of the riff-raff round Him! Whenever He speaks, you notice that He is surrounded by a lot of tax-gatherersthe scum employed to gather the money for the Romansfor no Jew would do that unless he was very far gone. Do you not see that there is one of them close to His side just now, listening to Him, and the tears are running down his checks? That is the kind of wretch to whom He preaches! And see that woman over there, that is the style of His hearers.   
Now, why did men and women of that kind always get so close to Christ? It was because they felt that He was their Friend. No, Rabbi Simeon, they will never come round you, so you need not trouble yourself upon that point. You can gather up your skirts and go home. They will not offend you by getting too close to your heels, for you are no friend of theirs. They know that and, somehow, sympathy draws people, while coldness repels them. I pray the Lord Jesus Christ to exercise that drawing influence over you, my dear Friends. Knowing that you are sinners, come and listen to the sinners Friend. Read the writings of the four Evangelists and see what He has said to youand whenever His Gospel is preached, or anything is said about Himtry to understand it and accept it. You will do so if you are wise.   
Next, not only draw near to Him, but test Him as often as need arises. There is nothing like putting Christ to the test! In a side street, not far from here, you may have seen in a window this notice, If any poor girl upon the streets desires to escape from her sinful way of living, she will find a friend inside. I felt very pleased when that notice in the window was pointed out to me and I think that if I were a poor girl in that sad case, and wished to escape, I would go inside to see what the friend could do for me. The Lord Jesus Christ has put in His window a message of this kind, Any sinner of any sort who desires to be saved, let Him come to Me. Now, do not merely stand at the window and read it, but come inside, my poor Brother! Come inside, my Sister! Come to Jesus. Come to Jesus just now!   
To get at Him, there is only this to be donejust trust Him. Trust Him implicitly, wholly, solely. Trust Him now. When you trust Him, then you are saved, for it is written, He that believes on the Son has everlasting life. If you have trusted Christ, you have everlasting life! That act of faith proves that everlasting life has dropped into your bosom and that Christ has said to you, Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you. Go, and sin no more.  
When you have trusted Christ and proved Him to be your Friend, proclaim to others what you know of Him. Whisper it about. You will find some more poor sinners who will be glad to hear the good news! You remember the dog at the hospital that went of his own accord and had his broken leg setand then he went again with another broken-legged dog? He was a sensible animal and oh, let every poor soul that has received Christ go and find another soul and bring him to Christ! In the depth of winter, at a time when I had a balcony to my study, I put some crumbs out upon it and there came a robin redbreast, first, and he pecked and ate all he could. I do not know his language, but I fancy I can tell what he said, for he went away and came back with ever so many sparrows and other birds! He had said to them, There are crumbs up here, come and get them. And they all came and they came in greater numbers every dayand I do not know how it was except that they told one another. One day, whether it was the robin or the sparrows, I do not know, but some of them told a blackbird and he was a bigger fellow than any of them. When he came, he stood near, for I should think, a minute, and then he spied me inside and flew away, for he thought, That good man does not like blackbirds. But he did not know me! I was pleased to see him and I should have liked to see a lot of such birds. So the robin went up to him and told him that he had been there for the last three or four days and I had never even threatened him. And, after being persuaded a little, the blackbird came back and the robin seemed to me to be quite pleased to think that he had converted this fellow and brought him back, for they dropped down together on the crumbs, and they had such a joyful feast that they came again and again!   
Oh, there are some of you, dear robin redbreasts, that have been here ever so long and have been eating my Masters crumbs! You have brought some sparrows to the feastnow try to entice a blackbird and if there is one blackbird bigger and bleaker than another, go and fetch him and bring him, for Jesus says that He will cast out none that come to Him by faithand you may be sure that it is true, for He is a friend of publicans and sinners. God bless you all, dear Friends, for Christs sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:   
**LUKE 7:24-50.**

Verse 24. And when the messengers of John were departed, He began to speak to the people concerning John. What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? Certainly not! John could never be compared to a reed shaken by the wind, for he was strong, sturdy, firm and steadfast. He was not like so many preachers, nowadays, who are swayed by the ever-changing opinion of the agethe thought of these modern timesand so prove themselves to be mere reeds shaken by the wind.

25. But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment! Behold, they which are gorgeously appareled, and live delicately, are in kings courts. John had been preaching in the desert with all his might, warning sinners to flee from the wrath to come. He was no court preacher, but a minister to the multitude, who delivered his HeavenInspired message in his own straightforward earnest style.

26, 27. But what did you go out to see? A Prophet? Yes, I say to you, and much more than a Prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, which shall prepare Your way before You. John was the morning star and Christ the glorious Sun! John was the herald proclaiming the coming of Christ and Christ, Himself, followed close at his heels!

28. For I say to you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater Prophet than John the Baptist. His was the highest office of all, immediately to precede Messiah, Himself.

28. But he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he. We have a fuller Gospel to preach than John had and we may expect to see greater results from the preaching of that Gospel than John could hope to see.

29-32. And all the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. And the Lord said, Unto what, then, shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling, one to another, and saying, We have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have mourned to you, and you have not wept. These children could not agree as to what game they would play. Come, they said, let us imitate a wedding. We will pipe and you can dance. But the others would not dance. Well, they said, let us play at

something. Let us imitate a funeralwe will be the mourners. Then the others would not weep. They would agree to nothing that was proposed and that is the point of the Saviors analogythat there are multitudes of men who always quarrel with any kind of ministry that God may send them. This mans style is much too ornatehe has a superabundance of the flowers of oratory. That other man is much too dullthere is nothing interesting about his discourses. This man is too coarsehe is so rough as even to be vulgar. That other man is too refined and uses language which shoots over peoples heads. It is easy to find fault when you want to do so. Any stick will do to beat a dog and any kind of excuse will do to allow your conscience to escape from the message of an earnest ministry. Our Lord told the people that this was the way they had acted towards Himself and John the Baptist.

33. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine An ascetic of ascetics   
33. And you say, he has a devil. He is out of his mind altogether, possessed by the devil.   
34. The Son of Man is come eating and drinkingThat is the Lord Jesus, Himself. He comes as a Man among men, and sits with you at your feasts, and does not lead the life of an ascetic.   
34. And you say, Behold a gluttonous Man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! There was no pleasing them either way! Whichever form of preacher the Lord sent, whether an ascetic or one like themselves, they found fault.   
35. But wisdom is justified of all her children. There shall come a day when it shall be seen that, after all, God knew best what style of preacher to send. He had work for each man to do and He adapted the man for the work He had entrusted to his charge.   
36. And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisees house and sat down to eat. Invitations from Pharisees were rather scarcethey did not often ask Christ to their houses. Even before this meal is over, there will be sure to be something like a quarrel, depend upon it!   
37. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinnerHer name is not given and there are good reasons why it should not be given. Certainly she was not Mary, the sister of Lazarus, nor Mary Magdalene, we may be quite sure of that. Our Savior leaves her in an anonymous condition and it is usually best that converts of this character should not be exhibited and their names made known. I believe that much cruel wrong has been done to reclaimed sinners when they have been pushed to the front. Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner.   
37, 38. When she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisees house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him, weepingHis feet probably lay towards the door as He reclined at the table. And she could readily get at them without becoming too conspicuous in the roomshe stood at His feet behind Him, weeping.   
38. And began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. What a blessed amalgam of humility, penitence, gratitude and love! All these are seen in what she did, especially in that unbinding of the tresses of her beauty which had been her nets in which she had taken the souls of men. Now she uses these for a towel. She began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.   
39. Now when the Pharisee which had bid Him, saw it, he spoke within himselfHe did not like to say it in so many words, but he spoke loud enough for himself to hear it and for Christ to hear it, too.   
39-44. Saying, This Man, if He were a Prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touches Him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. And he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said to him, You have rightly judged. And He turned to the woman and said to Simon, Do you see this woman? You did see this woman and you looked upon her with a frowning face. Now take another look at her by the light of My parable. Simon, Do you see this woman?   
44. I entered into your houseTherefore you were bound by the obligations of a host.   
44. You gave Me no water for My feet.An ordinary commonplace courtesy in the East, almost a necessity for those who have walked far and whose feet are weary and dustyYou gave Me no water for My feet.   
44. But she has washed My feet with tearsCostly water this! She has washed My feet with tears.   
44. And wiped them with the hairs of her head. She has done it, she has done it better than you would have done it! She has done it best of allshe has done what you ought to have doneshe has done it when there seemed to be no claim upon her to do it.   
45. You gave me no kiss.Though that was the ordinary mode of salutation to an honored guest   
46. But this woman, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You said in your heart that if I had been a Prophet, I would have known who and what manner of woman this was. I do know and I am telling you. If you had given Me a kiss, you would only have coldly kissed My brow, but she has found it in her heart to honor Me by kissing My feet. Since I came in, she has not ceased to kiss them, unwashed as they were, and she has not only kissed them, but she has also washed them with her tears.   
46. My head with oil you did not anointYou, the host, whose duty it was to anoint the head of your guest, did not do it.   
46. But this woman has anointed My feet with ointment. The best oil she possessed or could procure.   
47, 48. Therefore I say to you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. And He said to her, Your sins are forgiven. Not because she has done this, but this is an evidence that her sins are forgiven. This act of greater love is the proof that she must be conscious of the greater forgivenessshe loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. It is always like that! Your converted Pharisees have to be made to feel like this woman before they will render love like hers. And if Simon is ever made to feel that his sin, in a certain light, is as great as the sin of this fallen woman, then he will love as much as she does, but not till then. Jesus said to her, Your sins are forgiven. Oh, the marvelous music of that short sentence! If I had to choose from all language the choicest sentence that my ears could hear when under a sense of sin, it would be these four words which the Master addressed to this woman who was a notable public sinner, Your sins are forgiven.   
49. And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that also forgives sins? Now, you see, they begin to mutter and to quibble. What is this poor woman to do? Probably she felt ready to speak up for her Master, but, sometimes, it happens that the Lord Jesus Christ will not permit certain, even of His forgiven ones, to be very prominent.   
50. And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace. She was best out of the way of all controversy. She would honor Him most by going home and there sweetly singing to His praise and drinking deep draughts of His love. If any of you converts are meeting with those who laugh at you, do not stop where they are, but go about your business with these sweet words of your Master ringing in your earsYour faith has saved you; go in peace.

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PENITENCE, PARDON AND PEACE   
NO. 3359

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 1913.   
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***And, behold, a woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisees house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head,***

***and kissed His feet and she anointed them with the ointment. Luke 7:37-38.***

THIS is a marvelously vivid Gospel incident. Every detail is plainly and forcefully set forth, so that we can picture the scene, making it live before us, without much mental effort. And yet, in some respects, there is a great reticence, a Divine delicacy, gloriously characteristic of so tender a book as the New Testament. The Evangelistthe beloved physician, Lukedoes not lay bare the minute particulars of this womans lifes sins, but delights to dwell rather upon the story of her penitence and its fair fruits, and so makes her to shine resplendently as a wonder of redeeming Grace! The symptoms of her souls horrible malady he reveals in a single phraseand that of general descriptionbut upon the details of her gracious cure he delights to dwell.

We will consider the life of this famous penitent, as the Holy Spirit shall help us, under three heads, and notice, first, her former character. Then, her deed of love which showed her new character. And, thirdly, our Lords treatment of her. Let us very briefly look at

I. THE WOMANS CHARACTER, to begin with, in order that we may see the horrible pit out of which she was taken.   
We do not know much about her. Romish expositors generally insist upon it that she was Mary Magdalene, but this appears to other writers to have been quite impossible. Certainly it does not seem probable that a woman possessed with seven devils should follow the trade of a sinner. Demoniacal possession was akin to madness and it was frequently accompanied by epilepsy. And one would think that Magdalene was more fit to be a patient at an infirmary than an inmate of a reformatory. Some have even been so mistaken as to suppose this woman to have been Mary of Bethany, but this will never do. One cannot associate with the lovely household of Martha and Mary the horrible course of pollution implied in the vice which earned for this woman the special name of a sinner. Besides, although both women anointed our Lord, yet the place, the time, the manner were all different. I need not stay to show you the difference, for that is not the point in hand.

This woman was distinguished by the title of a sinner, and her touch was regarded by Simon the Pharisee as defiling. We are all sinners, but she was a sinner by professionsin was her occupation and probably her livelihood. The name in her case had an emphatic sense which involved shame and dishonor of the worst kind. The city streets wherein she dwelt could have told you how well she deserved her name. Poor fallen daughter of Eve, she had forsaken the guide of her youth and forgotten the Covenant of her God. She was one of those against whom Solomon warns young men, saying, Her house inclines unto death, and her paths unto the dead. Yet as Rahab was saved by faith, even so was she, for Grace covers even a harlots sins!   
She was a well-known sinner. Ill-fame had branded her so that Simon the Pharisee recognized her as one of the towns unhallowed sisterhood. Her way of life was common town talkpersons of decent character would not associate with hershe was cut off from respectable society and, like a leper, put outside the camp of social life. She was a sinner marked and labeled. There was no mistaking herinfamy had set its seal upon her.   
She was one who had evidently gone a great way in sin, because our Savior, who was far from being prejudiced against her, as Simon was, and never uttered a word that would exaggerate the evil in anyone, yet spoke of her sins which are many. She loved much, for much had been forgiven. She was the five hundred pence debtor as compared with Simon, who owed but fifty. It is not difficult to imagine her unhappy story because that story is so commonly repeated around us. We know not how she was first led into evil ways. Perhaps her trustful heart was deceived by flattering words and promises. Perhaps the treachery of one too dearly loved led her into sin and afterwards deserted her to loneliness and shame. Perhaps her mothers heart was broken and her fathers head was bowed down with sorrow, but she became bold enough to pursue the sin into which she had at first been betrayed and became the decoyer of others. That long hair of hers, I fear, is rightly called by Bishop Hall, the net which she was known to spread to catch her amorous companions. She was a sinner of the city in which she dwelt and, though her name is not mentioned, it was far too well known in her own day. She had lived an evil life we know not how long, but, certainly, she had greatly sinned, for her own flowing tears, as well as the Saviors estimate of her life, prove that she had been no ordinary offender. Let equal sinners be encouraged to go to Jesus as she did!   
But all her sin was known to Jesus. I mention this, not at all as a fact you do not know, but as one which any trembling sinner may do well to remember. If you have fallen into the same vice in a greater or lesser degree, whether others know it or not, Jesus knows all about it. Our Lord allowed her to wash His feet with her tears, but He knew well what those eyes had looked upon. When He allowed those lips to kiss His feet, He knew right well what language those lips had used in years gone by. And when He allowed her to show her love to Him, He knew how foul her heart had been with every unhallowed desire. Her evil imaginations and unchaste desires, her wanton words and shameless acts were all before the Saviors mind far more vividly than they were before her own, for she had forgotten muchbut He knew all. With all her tender sense of sin, she did not apprehend all the heinousness of her guilt as the perfect mind of Jesus didand yet though she was a sinner, a well-known sinner, and known best of all to the Savior to be such, yet, glory be to Divine Grace, she was not cast out when she came to Jesus, but she obtained mercy and is now shining in Heaven as a bright and special star to the glory of the love of Christ!   
When this woman stood in the house of Simon she was a believing sinner. We do not know how she became a convert, but, according to the harmony of the Gospels, this particular incident fits in just after Matthew 11that is to say, if Luke has written his story with the intent of chronological correctnessand if the harmonies are right, this passage comes in after the following blessed words, Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls, for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. Did this woman hear this gracious invitation? Did she feel that she was laboring and heavy laden? Did she look into the face of the great Teacher and feel that He spoke the truth and did she come to Him and find rest? Doubtless her faith came by hearingdid she hear in some crowd in the street the sweet wooing voice of the Sinners Friend? Was this the means of making the woman that was a sinner into the woman that anointed Jesus feet? We are not informed as to the particular means, nor is it of any consequence. She was converted and that is enoughhow it came about is a small matter. Perhaps even she, herself, could not have told us the precise words which impressed her mind, for many are most assuredly brought to Jesus, but the work has been so gentle, gradual and gracious that they feel themselves renewed, but hardly know how it came about! On the other hand, from the marked change in her character, it is highly probable that she did know the day, the hour and the precise means and if so, dear were the words which called her from the ways of folly, sin and shame! I do not suppose that our Savior had, at that time, delivered the memorable parable of the prodigal son, but it may have been some similar discourse which won her attention when she made one of a crowd of publicans and sinners who drew near to hear the Lord Jesus. Pressing forward among the men to catch those silver tones, so full of music, she wondered at the Man whose face was so strangely beautiful and yet so marvelously sadwhose eyes were so bright with tears and whose face so beamed with love and earnestness. The very look of that mirror of love may have affected her! A glance at that holy countenance may have awed her and His tones of deep pity and tender warningall these held her fast and drew her to abhor her sin and accept the joyful message which the great Teacher had come to proclaim! She believed in Jesus. She was saved and, therefore, she loved her Savior!   
When she came to the Pharisees house she was a forgiven sinner. She carried an alabaster box in her hand with which to anoint Him because she felt that He had been a priest to herand had cleansed her. She brought her choicest treasure to give to Him because He had bestowed on her the choicest of all gifts, namely, the forgiveness of sin. She washed His feet because He had washed her soul. She wept because she believedand loved because she trusted. She was, when she entered the room, in a condition of rest as in her forgiveness, for men are seldom deeply grateful for mercies which they are not sure of having obtained. Though after that deed she rose a step higher and became fully assured of her acceptance, even at her first coming she was conscious of forgiven sinand for that reason she paid her vows unto the forgiving Lord whom her soul loved.   
Our text begins with a, behold, and it may well be so, for a forgiven sinner is a wonder to Heaven, earth and Hell! A forgiven sinner! Though God has made this round world exceedingly fair, yet no work of Creation reflects so much of His highest Glory as the manifestation of His Grace in a pardoned sinner! If you range all the stars around and if it is so that every star is filled with a race of intelligent beings, yet, I think, among unfallen existences there can be no such marvel as a forgiven sinner. At any rate, he is a wonder to himself and he will never cease admiring the Divine Grace which pardoned and accepted him. What a miracle to herself must this woman have been. For a case like hers she had seen no precedent and this must have made it the more surprising to her! When your case also appears to stand out by itself, alone, as a towering peak of Grace, refrain not from wondering and causing others to wonder. All Glory to God, may some say, I, whose name could not be mentioned without making the cheek of modesty crimson, I am washed in the blood of the Lamb! I who was a blasphemer, who sat on the drunkards bench, who gloried in being an infidel and denied the Godhead of Christ, I, even I, am saved from wrath through Him! I who played a dishonest part, who respected not the laws of man any more than those of God, I who went to an excess of rioteven I am made whiter than snow through faith in Christ Jesus!   
Let all know it upon earth and let Heaven know itand let the loud harps ring in yon celestial halls because of matchless Grace! Behold, then, this womans character, and rememberhowever fallen you may have beenthe Grace of God can yet save you! Now, secondly, let us consider, at some length   
II. THE DEED OF LOVE WHICH INDICATED HER CONVERSION.   
Her conduct as a convert was wide as the poles asunder from that of her unregenerate stateshe became as evidently a penitent as she had been a sinner. One of the expositors upon this passage says that he cannot so much expound it as weep over itand I think every Christian must feel very much in that humor. O that our eyes were as ready with tears of repentance as were hers! O that our hearts were as full of love as hers and our hands as ready to serve the forgiving Lord! If she has exceeded some of us in the publicity of her sin, yet has she not exceeded all of us in the fervency of her affection!   
Let us notice what she did. And the first of 12 matters to which I shall call your attention is the earnest interest which she took in the Lord Jesus. Behold, a woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table. She had a quick ear for anything about Jesus. When she heard the news, it did not pass in one ear and out the other, but she was interested in the information and immediately went to the Pharisees house to find Him. There were hundreds in that city who did not care a farthing where Jesus was. If they heard the general gossip about Him, it did not concern them in the leastHe was nothing to them. But when she knew it, she was in motion at once to come even to His feet! Jesus will never again be an object of indifference to a forgiven sinner. If the Lord has pardoned you, you will henceforth feel the deepest interest in your Savior and in all things which concern His Kingdom and work among men. Now, if you have to move to any place, you will want to know first, Where can I hear the Gospel? Are there any lovers of Jesus there? If you are informed about a town or country, the information will not be complete till you have enquired, How is the cause of God prospering there? As you look upon your fellow men, the thought will strike you, How do they stand towards Christ? When you attend a place of worship, it will not matter much to you whether the edifice is architecturally beautiful, or the preacher a learned man and a great oratoryou need to know whether you can hear of Jesus in that place and be likely to meet with Him in that assembly! Your cry will be, Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed? If you perceive a sweet savor of Christ in the place, you feel that you have had a good Sabbath, but if Jesus Christ is lacking, you consider everything to be lackingand you groan over a lost Sabbath. A soul that has tasted Christs love cannot be put off with anything short of Himit hungers and thirsts after Him and any good word about Him is sweet unto the taste. Is it so with you?

*Tell it unto sinners, tell, I am, I am saved from Hell.*

Notice, next, the readiness of her mind to think of something to be done for Jesus. When she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisees house, she brought an alabaster box of ointmentshe was quick and ready in her thoughts of service. She would not appear before the Lord empty, but the resolve to bring an offering and the selection of that offering were quickly made. She would get that alabaster box of aromatic ointment, the daintiest and costliest perfume that she had, and she would anoint His feet to do Him honor. Many minds are inventive for the things of the world, but they seem to have no quickness of thought in reference to the service of Christthey proceed with dull routine, but never flash out with spontaneous deeds of love. This woman showed an original genius in her love. She was no copier of a former exampleher plan of service had the dew of freshness upon it. Mary of Bethany did something like it, but that was afterwardsthis was the womans own original idea. Her thoughtful soul struck out this new path for itself. We need more contriving, inventing and planning for Christ! See how we act towards those we lovewe consider what will please them and plot and plan some pleasant surprise for them. We put our heads together and ask, What shall it be? Let us think of something new and original. That thoughtfulness is half the beauty of the act.

Notice, thirdly, her promptness of action. She did not merely think that she had an alabaster box to give, but she took it at once and hastened to pour out its contents. Dear Friend, you have been saved by Grace and you have an alabaster box upstairs which you have long meant to bring downbut it is still there. Half-a-dozen times or more, when you have had your heart warmed by the love of Christ, you have felt that now was the time to bring out the box, but it still remains sealed up! You were so pleased with yourself for having such earnest feelings and generous resolutions that you stopped to admire yourself and forgot to carry out your resolutions! You have done nothing, though you have intended a great deal. Do you not sometimes feel as self-contented as if you had done something wonderful when, after all, you have only mapped out what you think you may possibly do at some future time? Indeed, it is a mighty easy thing to make yourself believe that you have really done what you have only dreamed about! This is wretched childs play and the woman before us would have none of it! She saw the occasion and she seized it. Jesus might not be in her city, again, and she might not be able to find Him for many a day. The thought struck her and she struck the thought while yet the iron was hot and fashioned it into a fact!

Observe, in the fourth place, her courage. She knew that Jesus was at the table in the Pharisees house. And she soon found Him reclining, in the Oriental fashion, with His feet near the door, for Simon was so uncivil that he was sure to give Him a poor place at the table. Seeing the Lord, she ventured in. It needed no small bravery for her to enter the house of a Pharisee, who, above all things, would dread to be touched by such a character! In her bad times she had seen the holy man gather up his garments and leave her a broad space on the streets, for fear that she should pollute his sacred person! She must have felt, as all penitent sinners do, an inward shrinking from the cold, hard, self-righteous professor of purity! She would have gone anywhere in that city rather than into Simons house. It must have cost her a great struggle to face his frowns and severe remarks. Perhaps, however, I am wrong. Indeed, I think I am, for she was so full of the desire to show her love and to honor the Lord Jesus that she forgot the Pharisee! Yes, and if the devil had been there, instead of Simon, she would have dared even him in his den, to reach her Lord! Still, there was much courage needed for one so lowly in her penitence to be able to bear the cold, contemptuous look of the master of the house. Conscious that she had been a castaway from society, yet she courageously fulfilled her mission, fearless of cruel remarks and taunting charges. O poor, timid seeking Soul, the Lord can also give you the courage of a lion in His cause, though now you are timid as a hare!

When, then, the penitent had reached the Masters feet, note well how one Grace balanced another and observe her humility tempering her courage. Her boldness was not forwardness nor indelicate impertinenceno, she was as bashful as she was brave! She did not advance to our Lords head, or thrust herself where He would readily see hermuch less did she presume to address Himbut she stood at His feet behind Him, weeping. She was probably but a little way in the room. She courted no observation. She was near Jesus, but it was near His feet, and weeping there. To weep at His feet was honor high enough for hershe sought no uppermost seat at the banquet. Ah, dear Friends, it is a blessed thing to see young converts bold, but it is equally delightful to see them humble! And they are none the worse for being very retiring if they have been great sinners.

I have been very sorry when I have seen a lack of modesty where it ought to have superabounded. There is more Grace in a blush than in a brazen forehead, far more propriety in holy shamefacedness than in pious impudence. Good Bishop Hall says, How well is the case altered! She was known to look boldly in the face of her lovers, and now she dares not behold the awful Countenance of her Savior! She had been accustomed to send alluring beams forth into the eyes of her paramours, but now she casts dejected eyes to the earth and dares not so much as raise them up to see those eyes from which she desired commiseration. Lowliness goes well with penitence. One would not wish humility to be corrupted into cowardice, nor courage to be poisoned into pride. This repenting sinner had both excellences in proper proportion and the two together put her exactly in the place where a woman that was a sinner ought to be when saved by Grace!

We see before us our reclaimed Sister looking down upon the Lords blessed feet. And as we mark her flowing tears, we pause to speak of her contrition. She gazed upon our Lords feet and I wonder whether that sight suggested to her how her feet had wanderedand how travel-worn had become the feet of the Lord, who had sought and found her

*She knew not of the bitter way   
Those sacred feet had yet to tread,   
Nor how the nails would pierce, one day, Where now her costly balms were shed.*

But she saw those feet to be all unwashed, for Jesus had been neglected where He ought to have been honored. And she saw therein the memory of her own neglect of Him who had so freely loved her soul. She wept at the memory of her sins, but she wept over His feet. She grieved most because she had grieved Him. She wept because she had sinned so much and then wept because He had forgiven her so freely! Love and grief in equal measures made up those precious tears. The Divine Spirit was at work within her, dissolving her very soul, even as it is written, He causes His wind to blow and the waters flow. And again, He smote the Rock and the waters gushed out. Do you marvel that she stood and wept? Thinking of herself and then thinking of Him, the two thoughts together were far too much for herand what could she do but both relieve her heart and express it in a shower of tears? Wherever there is a real forgiveness of sin, there will be real sorrow on account of it. He who knows that his sin is pardoned, is the man who most acceptably exercises repentance. Our hymn puts it on the right footing when it points, not to the horrors of Hell, but to the griefs of Immanuel, by which our pardon is certified to us as the deep source of sorrow for sin

*My sins, my sins, my Savior,   
How sad on You they fall!   
Seen through Your gentle patience,   
I tenfold feel them all.   
I know they are forgiven,   
But all their pain to me   
Is all the grief and anguish   
They laid, my Lord, on Thee.*

After admiring this womans contrition, notice her love. The Holy Spirit took delight in adorning her with all the Divine Graces and she came behind in nothingbut she excelled in love. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when He translated her act of anointing His feet, expressed it in the one word, love. He said, She loved much. I cannot speak much with you concerning love, for it is rather to be felt than to be described. Words have no power to bear the weight of meaning which lies in love to Christ. Oh, how she loved! Her eyes, her hair, her tearsherselfshe counted all as nothing for His dear sake! Words failed her, as they fail us and, therefore, she betook herself to deeds in order to let her heart have vent. Alabaster box and ointment were all too little for Himthe essence of her heart was distilled to bathe His feetand the glory of her head was unbound to furnish Him with a towel! He was her Lord, her All-in-All! If she could have laid kingdoms at His feet, she would have rejoiced to do so! As it was, she did her best and He accepted it.

This love of hers led her to personal service. Her hands were the servants of her heart and did their part in the expression of her affection. She did not send the alabaster box to Jesus by her sister, or ask a disciple to pass it to Him, but she performed the anointing with her own hands, the washing with her own tears and the wiping with her own hair. Love cannot be put off with proxy service! She seeks no substitute, but offers her own person! I grant, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we can serve the Lord a great deal by helping others to serve Him, and it is right and proper to help those who are able to labor better and more widely than we can. But still, it is not right that we should rest content with thatwe ought to be ambitious to render tribute to our Lord with our own hands. We cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of doing some little thing for our Beloved Lord. Suppose this loving woman had had a sister who loved the Master even as she did? And suppose, like a loving sister, she had said to her, I fear it will be too heavy a task for you to face coldhearted SimonI will take the box and anoint our blessed Lord and tell Him that I did it for youand so He shall know your love. Do you think she would have consented to the proposal? Ah, no, it would not have answered the purpose at all. Love refuses sponsors. She must anoint those blessed feet

herself. Now, dear Friends, you who hope that you have been forgiven, are you doing anything for Jesus? Are you, on your own, serving Him? If not, let me tell you, you are missing one of the greatest delights that your souls can ever know and, at the same time, you are omitting one of the chief fruits of the Spirit! Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? is the question, and if you wish to answer it with proof positive, then go, and with your own hands, feed the Saviors sheep! Surely you cannot love Him as you should, unless each day has its deed of love, its sacrifice of gratitude!

Observe, next, that her service was rendered to the Lord Himself. Read the passage and place an emphasis upon the words which refer to the Lord. She stood at His feet, behind Him, weeping, and began to wash His feet, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. It was not for Peter, or James, or John that she acted as servitor. I have no doubt she would have done anything for any of His disciples, but at this time all her thoughts were with her Lordand all her desire was to honor Him. It is a delightful thing for Christian people to lay themselves out distinctly for the Lord Jesus. There should be more ministering unto Him, more definite aiming at His Glory. To give money to the poor is good, but sometimes it is better to spend it upon Jesus more distinctly, even though some Judas or other should complain of waste

*Love is the true economist!   
She breaks the box and gives her all,   
Yet not one precious drop is missed,   
Since on His head and feet they fall.*

One is glad to serve the Churchwho would not wait upon the bride for the bridegrooms sake? One is glad to go into the streets and lanes of the city to gather in poor sinners, but our main motive is to honor the Savior. See, then, how she who was once a harlot has become a zealous lover of the Lord and is ready to wash her Lords feet, or perform any service which may be permitted her, if she may work a good work upon Him!

Further, note that what she did, she did very earnestly. She washed His feet, but it was with tears. She wiped them, but it was with those luxurious tresses which were all unbound and disheveled that she might make a towel of them for His blessed feet. She kissed His feet and she did it again and again, for she did not cease to kiss His feet, or if she made a moments pause, it was only that she might pour on more of the ointment. She was altogether taken up with her Lord and His work! Her entire nature concurred in what she did and awakened itself to do it well. True love is intenseits coals burn with vehement heatit makes all things around it living. Dead services cannot be endured by living hearts!

Furthermore, notice the womans absorption in her work. There she stood, anointing His feet with ointment and kissing them again and again. Simon shook his head, but what of that? He frowned and cast black looks at her, but she ceased not to wash His feet with her tears! She was too much occupied with her Lord to care for scowling Pharisees. Whether anyone observed her or not, or whether observers approved or censured, was a very small matter to hershe went quietly on accomplishing the suggestion of her loving heart!

And what she did was so real, so practical, so free from the mere froth of profession and pretence. She never said a wordand why not? Because it was all act and all heart with her. Words! Some abound in them, but what wretched things words are with which to express a heart. As in a glass, darkly, can we see the reflection of a souls love in its most passionate utterances?. Actions are far more loud and have a sweeter tone than words! This woman had done with speech, for the time being, at any rate, and tears and disheveled hair and poured-out ointment must speak for her! She was too much in earnest to call anyones attention to what she was doing, or to care for anyones opinion, much less to court commendation, or to answer the ugly looks of the proud professor who scorned her! This thorough oblivion of all except her Lord constituted, in a measure, the charm of her deed of loveit was wholehearted and entire loyalty which her homage revealed. Now, dearly Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, I do pray that you and I, as pardoned sinners, may be so taken up with the service of our Lord Jesus Christ that it may not matter to us who smiles or who frowns! And may we never take the trouble to defend ourselves if people find fault, or ever wish for anybody to commend us, but be so taken up with Him and the work He has given us to do, and with the love we feel to Him, that we know nothing else! If all others run away from the work. If all discourage us, or if they all praise us, may we take but small notice of them, but keep steadily to our loving service of Jesus! If Grace enables us to do this, it will be greatly magnified.

See, dear Friends, what Divine Grace made of the woman that was a sinner. Perhaps you thought her worse than yourselves in her carnal statewhat do you think of her as a penitent? What do you think of yourselves if you stand side by side with her? Do you not blush for very shame and ask for forgiveness of your Lord for the slenderness of your affection? Lastly, let us see

III. THE SAVIORS BEHAVIOR TO HER.   
What did He do? First, He silently accepted her service. He did not move His feet away, did not rebuke her, or bid her to leave. He knew that reflections were being cast upon His Character by His allowing her to touch Him, yet He did not forbid her, but, on the contrary, continued quietly enjoying the feast of repentance, gratitude and love which she spread for Him. He was refreshed by seeing such Grace in one who had before been so far from God. The perfumed ointment was not so grateful to His feet as her love was to His soulfor Jesus delights in love especially in penitent love! Her tears did not fall in vainthey refreshed the heart of Jesus, who delights in the tears of repentance. The applause of a nation would not have solaced Him one-half as much as this womans pure, grateful, contrite, humble love! His silence gave consent, yes, even approbation! And she was happy enough to be allowed to indulge herself in expressions of adoring affection.  
Then the Lord went a little farther, He turned round and looked at her, and said to Simon, Do you see this woman? That glance of His must have encouraged her and made her heart dance for joy! As soon as ever those eyes of His lighted on her, she could see that all was rightshe knew that whoever frowned, there were no frowns on that browand she was filled with supreme contentment!   
Next, the Lord spoke, and defended her triumphantly, and praised her for her deed! Yes, and He went beyond that and personally spoke to her and said, Your sins are forgiven you, setting a seal to the pardon which she had received and making her assurance doubly sure! This was a joy worth worlds   
She had a choice blessing in hearing from His own lips that her faith was firmly based and that she was, indeed, forgiven! Then she received a direction from Him as to what to doGo in peace. A forgiven sinner is anxious to know what he may do to please his Lord. Show me what You would have me to do, was Pauls prayer. So our Lord Jesus seemed to say, Beloved, do not stay here battling with these Pharisees. Do not tarry in this crowd of cavilers. Go home in perfect peace and as you have made home unhappy by your sin, make it holy by your example.   
That is just, I think, what the Lord Jesus would have me say to my dear friends who have followed me in this discourse. You see what Grace can dogo home and let your family see it! If any of you are conscious of great sinand have received great forgivenessand, therefore, wish to show your love to Jesus, do what is on your heart! But at the same time remember that He would have you go in peace. Let a holy calm abide in your breast. Do not enter into the vain jangling and endless controversies of the hour. Do not worry yourself with the battles of the newspapers and magazines that are everlastingly worrying poor souls with modern notions. Go in peace! You know what you knowkeep to that. You know your sin and you know Christ, your Savior! Keep to Him and live for Him. Go home into the family circle and do everything you can to make home happy, to bring your brothers and sisters to Christ and to encourage your father and mother if they have not yet found the Savior!   
Home is especially a womans place. There she reigns as a queen! Let her reign well. Around the hearth and at the table, in the sweets of domestic relationships and quiet friendships, a woman will do more for the Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ than by getting up to preach! In the cases of men, also, many who long to flash in public had better by far shine at home! Go home in peace and, by a happy, holy life, show to others what saints God can make out of sinners! You have seen what sin and the devil can do to degradego and prove what Grace and the Holy Spirit can do to elevateand may many, cheered by your example, come and trust your Lord!

*Oh, might I hear Your heavenly tongue But whisper, You are Mine,   
The heavenly word should raise my song To notes almost Divine.*

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THE WOMAN WHICH WAS A SINNER   
NO. 801

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, MARCH 22, 1868, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisees house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head,   
and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Luke 7:37-38.**

THIS is the woman who has been confused with Mary Magdalene. How the error originated, it would not be easy to imagine, but error it certainly is. There is not the slightest shadow of evidence that this woman, who was a sinner, had even the remotest connection with her out of whom Jesus cast seven devils. In delivering you a sermon a few Sabbaths ago, upon the life of Mary of Magdala, [#792,

Mary Magdalene, January 26, 1868] I think I showed you that it was hardly possible, and most improbable that she could have been a sinner in the sense here intended. And now I venture to affirm that there is as much evidence to prove that the woman in the narrative now before us, was the Queen of Sheba, or the mother of Sisera, as that she was Mary Magdalenethere is not a figment or fraction of evidence to be found! The fact is, there is no connection between the two.

Further, the sinner before us is not Mary of Bethany, with whom so many have identified her. Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, did anoint our Savior, but this is a previous anointing, by quite a different person, and the two narratives are altogether distinct. There is a great likeness, certainly, between the two. The principal persons were both women, full of ardent love to Christ. They both anointed the Lord with ointmentthe name of Simon is connected with both, and they both wiped the Saviors feet with their hair. But it ought not to astonish you that there were two persons whose intense affection thus displayed itselfthe astonishment should rather be that there were not 200 who did so, for the anointing of the feet of an honored friend was by no means so uncommon a token of respect among the Orientals as to be an unprecedented marvel.

Loved as Jesus deserved to be, the marvel is that He was not more often visited with these generous tokens of human love. It is a pity to fuse two occasions into one, as though we grudged a double unction to the Anointed of the Lord. That both events should happen in the houses of persons named Simon is not at all remarkableremember that the one was Simon the Pharisee, and the other Simon the leperand that Simon is one of the most common of Jewish names. In our day a thing having happened in the house of a John, and another thing like it in the house of another John, would not be remarkable since Johns are exceedingly common among us, as were Simons in the days of our Lord. But that the two, or perhaps I should say three, anointings (for I am inclined to think there were three) are not the same is evident from the following reasons: they differ in time. Our Lord lived at least six months after His anointing by this woman, and if you follow the narrative you read in the very next chapter, And it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the Twelve were with Him. But when Mary anointed Him at Bethany, He said, She did it for My burial, and our Lord was then within a very few days of His Crucifixion.

The anointing by Mary, the sister of Lazarus, took place at Bethany (Matthew 26:6), but this occurred in Galilee, which is quite another quarter. Moreover, the fact itself was really a very different one, for although both women anoint Christ with ointment, yet there was a peculiar preciousness and power of perfume about the spikenard of the wealthier Mary which is not mentioned in the ointment of this woman of a lower position in life. Mary, according to John (John 12:3), poured out a whole pound of the costly nard, but such is not said of the humble offering of the woman that was a sinner.

Matthew tells us that a woman poured the ointment on His head, but this poor penitent is only said to have anointed His feet. Tears are not mentioned in connection with Mary by either Matthew, Mark, or John, while they make a conspicuous feature in the love of the gracious mourner now before us. After the transaction there was an objection raised in both cases, but mark the great difference! In this case, Simon the Pharisee objected because she, being a sinner, was allowed to have such familiarity with the Lord. In the other case no such objection was raised to the person, but Judas Iscariot objected to her having been so profuse and extravagant in the abundance and costliness of the anointing, and murmured, saying that this ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor.

If you confuse these two occurrences, you not only make an flagrant mistake, but you lose a precious lesson. This case now before us is the offering of a poor returning wanderer, who, under a deep sense of gratitude, brings the best she has to her Lord and is accepted by His Divine Grace. In the case of Mary of Bethany, it was an advanced saintone who had sat at Jesus feet and heard of Him, and had before chosen the good part which should not be taken away from herand she brings a costly tribute as the offering of her deep, sincere affection which had grown and deepened by the receipt of many favors from His loving hand.

The advanced Believer is more bold than the new convert. She anoints His head when the other only anoints His feet, but she is not less loving, for if there are fewer tears, there is a more costly spikenard. Jesus defended the penitent, and bade her go in peace. But in Marys case there was no need to say, Your sins are forgiven, for she already possessed that priceless gift! Our Lord, instead of merely defending, warmly eulogized her love, and declared, Wherever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman has done, be told for a memorial of her. Thus much will suffice to show you that the woman which was a sinner is neither to be confused with Mary of Magdala on the one hand, or Mary of Bethany on the other. Let us learn to read our Bibles with our eyes opento study them as men do the works of great artistsstudying each figure and even each sweet variety of light and shade.

But too long have we been controverting on the threshold of the text! Let us now lift the latch. Lo, on the table I see two savory dishes, let us feed thereon. Here are two silver bells, let us ring them! Their first note is Grace, and the second tone is Love.

I. GRACE, the most costly of spikenardthis story literally drips with itlike those Oriental trees which bleed perfume, or as the spouse when she rose up to open to her Beloved, and her hands dropped with myrrh, and her fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. Grace, that gentle dew of Heaven, is here plenteously distilled and falls like small rain upon the tender herb. GraceSovereign, Distinguishing, Omnipotentis exceedingly magnified in this narrative. Lo, I see it exalted upon a glorious high throne, with the kings daughter waiting as an honorable woman among its courtiers!

1. First, Grace is here glorified in its object. She was a sinnera sinner not in the flippant, unmeaning, everyday sense of the termbut a sinner in the blacker, filthier, and more obnoxious sense. She had forsaken the guide of her youth and forgotten the Covenant of her God. She had sinned against the laws of purity and had made herself as a defiled thing. She had fallen into that deep ditch concerning which it is written, The abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein. According to our Lords parable, she was in comparison with the Pharisee as a 500-pence sinner, while the Pharisee was but as fifty.

She was one of the scarlet sinners that we read of in Scriptureshe sinned and made others to sin. Hers were offenses which provoke the Lord to jealousy and stir up His wrath. Yet, oh, miracle of miracles! she was an object of Distinguishing Grace, ordained unto eternal life! Why was this? On what legal grounds was she selected? For what merit was she chosen? Was this an extraordinary and out-of-the-way instance? By no means, dear Friends, for the Grace of God has frequently chosen the lowest of the low, and the vilest of the vile.

Recollect how, in the pedigree of our Lord, you find the name of the shameless Tamar, the harlot Rahab, and the unfaithful Bathsheba, as if to indicate that the Savior of sinners would enter into near relationship with the most degraded and fallen of our race! This is, in fact, one of the dearest titles of our Lord, though it was hissed at Him from the lips of contempt, A friend of publicans and sinners. This is Jesus Character of which He is not ashamed: This man receives sinners and eats with them.

Free Grace has made no distinction among men on account of merit, whether false or real, if real there is. The Law has concluded us all in unbelief, and then the abounding Grace of God, looking upon us all as equally cast away and ruined both by Adams Fall and by our own personal transgression, has predestinated and called whomever it would. Do you not hear from the Throne of Mercy the echoes of that Sovereign proclamation, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion? Grace has pitched upon the most unlikely cases in order to show itself to be Grace! It has found a dwelling place for itself in the most unworthy heartthat its freeness might be the better seen.

Do I address one who has greatly fallen? Let this thought comfort you, if your heart bewails your sinlet this give you hope of mercythat in the election of Grace some of the grossest blasphemers, persecutors, thieves, fornicators and drunkards have been includedand in consequence thereof they have been forgiven, renewed, and made to live sober, righteous, and godly lives! Such as these have obtained mercy so that in them, first, God might show forth all longsuffering as a comfort and encouragement to others to cry unto the Lord for mercy.

Grace reigns right majestically in the case before us, in that this particular sinner should be chosen. To choose a sinner was something, but to choose this one individual was even more astonishing! No doubt, she did in spirit ask herself, Why me, Lord? Why me? Had she been here this morning, she would sing as heartily as any of us

*Oh, gift of gifts!   
Oh, Grace of faith!   
My God, how can it be   
That You, who has discerning love,   
Should give that gift to me?   
How many hearts You might have had   
More innocent than mine!   
How many souls more worthy far   
Of that pure touch of Yours!   
Ah, Grace! Into unlikeliest hearts   
It is Your boast to come;   
The glory of Your light to find   
In darkest spots a home.*

At yonder table sits Simon the Pharisee, a good respectable body, as he thinks himself to be, and yet no Divine choice has fallen upon himwhile this poor harlot is elected by Distinguishing Grace! How can we account for this? Many there were in the city like to herself, some worse, some betterbut Grace had marked her as its own. Oh strange, yet admirable Sovereignty!

Now, it is possible that you may not be much taken with the glory of Grace in selecting her, but I will ask you whether you are not delighted with the Grace which separated you to be the Lords? O Brothers and Sisters, when once a man discovers that God has chosen himwhen he feels that Grace has broken his heart, has brought him to Christ and has covered him with a perfect righteousnessthen he breaks out in wondering exclamations, How could You have chosen me? What am I, and what is my fathers house, that I should be taken into such royal favor? The more a Believer looks within, the more he discovers reasons for Divine wrath and the less he believes in his own personal merit. How is the heart of a true Believer filled with adoring gratitude that ever the Lords boundless love should have been pleased to settle and fix itself upon him!

This is not so much for me to discourse upon as it is for your private meditations. I earnestly commend to you that precious thought, that Jehovah loved you from before the foundations of the world and chose you when He might have left youchose you when He passed over thousands of the great and the noble, the wise, and the learned. The doctrine is not a dogma to be fought over, as dogs over a bone, but to be rejoiced in and turned to practical account as an incentive to reverent wonder and affectionate gratitude. Where sin abounded Grace did much more abound, and the woman which was a sinner, is now before us a weeping penitent. The sinner of the city, a public sinner, is now openly a follower of the Holy One!

2. Grace is greatly magnified in its fruits. Who would have thought that a woman who had yielded her members to be servants of unrighteousness, to her shame and confusion, should have now becomewhat if I call her a maid of honor to the King of kings?one of Christs most favored servitors? She offered hospitalities to Jesus which the Pharisee omitted, and offered them in an infinitely better spirit and style than the Pharisee could have done if he had tried!

Let us remark that the Grace of God brought this woman in a way of Providence to listen to the Saviors discourses. In a former part of this chapter it appears He had been preaching the Gospel, and more especially preaching it to the poor. Perhaps she stood in the street attracted by the crowd, and, as she listened to our Saviors talk, it seemed to hold her fast. She had never heard a man speak after that fashion and when He spoke of abounding mercy, and the willingness of God to accept as many as would come to Him, then the tears began to follow each other down her cheeks.

And when she listened again to that meek and lowly Preacher and heard Him tell of the Father in Heaven who would receive prodigals and press them to His loving bosom, then her heart was fairly broken. She relinquished her evil trafficshe became a new woman, desirous of better thingsanxious to be freed from sin. But she was greatly agitated in her heart with the questioncould she, would she be really forgiven? Would such pardoning love as she had heard of reach even to her? She hoped so, and was in a measure comforted. Her faith grew, and with it an ardent love.

The Spirit of God still worked with her till she enjoyed a feeble hope, a gleam of confidence! She believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, that He had appeared on earth to forgive sins and she rested on Him for the forgiveness of her sins and longed for an opportunity to do Him homage, and if possible to win a word direct from His mouth. The Lord of Mercy came to the city where she lived. Now, she thought, here is my opportunity. That blessed Prophet has come! The Man who spoke as never man spoke is near me and I have already derived such benefit from Him that I love Him better than all besidesI love Him as my own soul. I will steal into the house of the Pharisee that I may feast my eyes with the sight of Him.

Now when she came to the door the Savior was reclining at His meat, according to the Oriental custom, and His feet were towards the doorfor the Pharisee had but little respect for Christ and had not given Him the best and innermost place at the feast. But there He lay with His uncovered feet towards the door. And the woman, almost unperceived, came close to Him. And, as she looked and saw that the Pharisee had refused Him the ordinary courtesy of washing His feet, and that they were all stained and travel-worn with His long journeys of love, she began to weep, and the tears fell in such plenteous showers that they even washed His feet. Here was holy water of a true sort. The crystal of penitence falling in drops, each one as precious as a diamond!

Never were feet bedewed with a more precious water than those penitent eyes showered forth. Then, unbinding those luxurious tresses which had been for her the devils nets in which to entangle souls, she wiped the sacred feet with them. Surely she thought that her chief adornment, the crown and glory of her womanhood, was all too worthless a thing to do service to the lowest and meanest part of the Son of God. That which once was her vanity now was humbled and yet exalted to the lowest officeshe made her eyes a pitcher and her locks a towel. Never, says Bishop Hall, was any hair so preferred as this! How I envy those locks that were graced with the touch of those sacred feet.

There a sweet temptation overtook her, I will even kiss those feet, I will humbly pay reverence to those blessed limbs. She spoke not a word, but how eloquent were her actions! Better, even, than Psalms and hymns were these acts of devotion! Then she thought of that alabaster box containing perfumed oil with which, like most Eastern women, she was likely to anoint herself for the pleasure of the smell and for the increase of her beauty. And now, opening it, she pours out the costliest thing she has upon His blessed feet. Not a word, I say, came from her! And, Brothers and Sisters, we would prefer a single speechless lover of Jesus who acted as she did, to 10,000 noisy talkers who have no gifts, no heart, no tears!

As for the Master, He remained quietly acquiescent, saying nothing, but all the while drinking in her love and letting His poor weary heart find sweet solace in the gratitude of one who once was a sinner, but who was to be such no more. Grace, my Brethren, deserves our praise, since it does so much for its object. Grace does not choose a man and leave him as he is. My Brothers and Sisters, men rail at Grace, sometimes, as though it were opposed to moralitywhereas it is the great source and cause of all complete moralityindeed, there is no real holiness in the sight of God except that which Grace creates, and which Grace sustains.

This woman, apart from Grace, had remained black and defiled, still, to her dying daybut the Grace of God worked a wondrous transformation, removing the impudence of her face, the flattery from her lips, the finery from her dress and the lust from her heart. Eyes which were full of adultery were now founts of repentance! Her lips which were doors of lascivious speech, now yielded holy kissesthe profligate was a penitent, the castaway a new creature. All the actions which are attributed to this woman illustrate the transforming power of Divine Grace. She exhibited the deepest repentance. She wept abundantly. She wept out of no mere sentimentalism, but at the remembrance of her many crimes. She wept for sorrow and for shame as she thought over her early childhood, and how she had slighted a mothers training, how she had listened to the tempters voice and hurried on from bad to worse.

Every part of her life story would rise before her as a painfully vivid dream. The sight of those blessed feet helped her to remember the dangerous paths into which she had wandered. The sluices of grief were drawn up and her soul flowed out in tears. O blessed Spirit of Grace, we adore You as we see the rock smitten and the waters gushing. He causes His wind to blow and the waters to flow. Note the womans humility. She had once possessed a brazen face and knew no bashfulness, but now she stands behind the Savior. She did not push herself in before His faceshe was content to have the meanest standing-place. If she might not venture to anoint His head, yet, if she might do service to His feet, she blushed as she accepted the honor. Those who truly serve the Lord Jesus have a holy bashfulness, a shrinking sense of their own unworthiness and are content to fulfill the very lowest office in His household.

That is no service for Christ when you would need ride the kings horse, and wear the kings garment and have it said, This is the man whom the king delights to honor. That is serving yourself rather than Christ when you covet the chief place in the synagogue, and would have men call you Rabbi. But that is real service when you can care for the poor. When you can condescend to men of low estate and become a teacher of the ignorant and an instructor of babes. He serves well who works behind his masters back, unknown and unperceivedtoiling in the dark, unreported, unapplauded, and happy to have it so. See, Beloved, how in a woman who was once so shameless, Grace plants and makes to flourish the fair and modest flower of true humility!

Yet was the woman courageous, for she must have needed much courage to enter into a Pharisees house. The look of a Pharisee to this woman must have been enough to freeze summer into howling winter. Those Pharisees had an insufferable contempt of everybody who was not of their own cliquewho did not fast twice a week, and tithe their mint, anise, and cumin. They said, by every gesture, Stand by, I am holier than you. To a person of infamous character the pompous Pharisee would be

doubly contemptuous, and a woman conscious of unworthiness would be sorely wounded by his manners. Besides, at a feast her tears would be much out of place, and therefore she would be the more rudely rebuked.

But how fearless she was! And how bravely she held her tongue when Simon railed! What will not men and women do when Divine Grace moves them to love, and love prompts them to courage? Yes, into the very jaws of Hell the Grace of God would make a Believer dare to enter if God commanded him. There is no mountain too high for a believing foot to scale, and no furnace too hot for a believing heart to bear. Let Rome and its amphitheatres, Piedmont and its snow, France and its galleys, Smithfield and its stakes, the Netherlands and their rivers of bloodlet them all speak of what Divine Grace can do when once it reigns in the heartwhat heroes it can make of the very weakest and most timid of Gods children where it rules supreme!

I have said that in every part of this womans action Grace is honored, and it is so more especially in this respect, that what she did was practical. Hers was not pretense, but real and expensive service. The religion of some professors stops short at their substanceit costs them nothing, and, I fear, is worth nothing. They appear before the Lord empty. They buy no sweet cane with money, neither does the Lord receive the fat of their sacrifices. I must confess myself utterly at a loss to understand the piety of some people! I thank God I am not bound to understand it, and that I am not sent into the world to be a judge of my fellow creaturesbut I do greatly wonder at the religion of many. There are to be found, and I have found them, persons whose love to Christ is of such a sort that they give to His cause the larger proportion of their substance, and do so gladly, thinking it a privilege! Yes, I know some who pinch themselves some of the poor and needy who stint themselves that they may give to Christ!

Such are doubtless blessed in the deed. I do not understand those men who have thousands upon thousands of pounds, perhaps hundreds of thousands, and profess to love Christ, but dole out their gifts to Jesus in miserable fragments. I must leave them to their Master, to be judged at the last, but I confess I do not understand them or admire them. If I did love Christ at all, I would love Him so that I would give Him all I could, and if I did not do that, I think I would say, He is not worth it, and I will not be a sham professor. It is rank hypocrisy to profess love and then to act a miserly part. Let those who are guilty of it settle the account between God and their own souls. This womans alabaster box was given freely, and if she had had more to give she would have given it after the spirit of that other woman, that memorable widow, who had two mites which made a farthingwhich were all her livingbut she gave it all out of love to God.

Grace reigns, indeed, with high control when it leads men who naturally would be selfish to practice liberality in the cause of the Redeemer. Let these gleanings sufficethe vintage of the fruits of Grace is too great for us to gather it all this morning.

3. I would have you remark, in the third place, that Grace is seen by attentive eyes in our Lords acceptance of what this chosen vessel had to bring. Jesus knew her sin. The Pharisee wondered that Jesus did not shrink from contact with her. You and I may wonder, too. We sometimes feel it a task to have to commune with persons of a certain character even when they profess to repentour Lords sensitiveness of the guilt of sin was much keener than ours, yet He rested still upon the couch and quietly accepted what she broughtHe permitted her the fond familiarity of kissing His feet again and again and to bedew them with her tearsHe permitted all that, I say, and accepted all that, and herein made His Grace to shine most brightly.

Oh, that Jesus should ever accept anything of me! That He should be willing to accept my tears, willing to receive my prayers and my praises! We cheerfully accept a little flower from a child, but then the flower is beautiful and we are not far above the child. But Jesus accepts from us that which is in its nature impure, and upbraids us not! O Grace, how condescending you are! See, Believer, Jesus has heard your prayers and answered them! He has blessed your labors, given you souls as your reward, and at this moment that which is in your heart to do for Him He receives, and He raises no objection, but takes what you bring to Him takes it with joy! O Grace, you are Grace, indeed, when the offerings of unworthy ones become dear unto Jesus heart.

4. Further, Divine Grace is displayed in this narrative when you see our Lord Jesus Christ become the defender of the penitent. Everywhere Grace is the object of human mockery. Men snap at it like evening wolves. Some attack it at the fountain headthey cannot endure the doctrine of election. Some professors almost foam at the mouth at the very mention of the word predestination. They cannot bear it, and yet it is Gods Truth! Let them say what they will, and there shall it stand. Let them kick against the pricks if they dare. It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.

Would to God men would give up their rebellious questions and bow before the King of kings! On this occasion, Simon quibbled at Grace in that a sinful woman should be allowed to approach the Lordhe would have put her in quarantine at the leastif not in prison. Some object to Grace in its perpetuitythey struggle against persevering Grace. But others, like this Simon, struggle against the bounty of Grace. How could such a woman as she was be permitted to draw so near to Christ? Certain captious spirits will demand, How should Jesus give to such unworthy ones such acceptance, such manifestations of Himself, such privileges?

Our Lord took upon Himself to defend her, and therefore she might well afford to hold her tongue. So shall it be with you. If Satan accuses you and your enemies, with loud-mouthed accusations cry out against you, you have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who will certainly plead your cause and clear you! Jesus, by His defensive parable shows that He was justified in letting the woman approach, because great love prompted her. There was no sin in her approach, but much to commend, since her motive was excellent, and the motive is the true measure of a deed. She felt intense love and gratitude towards the Person who had forgiven her. Therefore her acts were not to be forbidden, but commended.

He justifies her and incidentally justifies Himself. Had He not done well in having won a sinners heart to penitence and love? Was not election justified in having chosen one to such holy devotedness and fervency? At the Last Great Day the Lord will justify His Grace before the eyes of the whole universe, for He will allow the Grace-worked virtues of His chosen ones to be unveiledand all eyes shall see that Grace reigns through righteousness! Then shall they forever be silenced who accused the Grace of God of leading to licentiousness, for they shall see that in every case free forgiveness led to gratitude, and gratitude to holiness. The chosen shall be made choice men. Grace chose them notwithstanding all their deformitiesand when it has cast about them a supernal beautythey shall be the wonder and admiration of the universe, evidently made to be the noblest and best of mankind.

Show me where Divine Grace ever created sin! You cannot, but lo, in what a manner has Grace created holiness! It is not ashamed to let its chosen sheep appear before the great dividing Shepherds throne, for of them all it shall be said, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink. Grace does not smuggle men into Heaven, but brings them up to Heavens requirements through the Spirit and the blood!

5. Once more, my Brethren, the Grace of God is seen in this narrative in the bestowal of yet richer favors. Great Grace saved her, rich Grace encouraged her, unbounded Grace gave her a Divine assurance of forgiveness. It was proved that she was forgiven, for she loved much, but she had never received the full assurance of it. She was a hopeful penitent rather than a confirmed Believer. But the Master said, Your sins are forgiven you. From that moment full assurance of faith must have occupied her soul.

And then He gave her that choice benediction, Go in peace, by which the peace of God which passes all understanding henceforth kept her mindso that even when she had to go out of this world into the unknown realm, she heard in the midst of Jordans billows, the Divine sentenceGo in peace. Ah, Beloved, you know not what Grace can do for you! God is not stinted in His Grace. If He has lifted you up out of the miry clay, He can do moreHe can set your feet upon a rock! If on the rock you already stand, He can do moreHe can put a new song into your mouth! And if already you lift the joyous hymn, He can do more yetHe can establish your goings! You do not yet know the exceeding bounty of your own heavenly Father! Unfathomable is His goodness! Arise and enjoy

it! Behold the whole land is before you, from Dan unto Beershebaall the

provisions of the Covenant of Grace belong to you. Have but faith and you shall yet comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. Here, then, was Grace in its object, Grace in its fruit, Grace in the acceptance of that fruit, Grace in the defense which Jesus made of the gracious one and Grace in the blessings bestowed upon her. May Grace deal thus bountifully with us.

II. We have but two or three moments left for what requires far more space, namely, LOVE. The word blossoms with roses and suggests the voice of the turtledoves and the singing of birds. Our time, however, binds us to a narrow path which we must not leave, although the beds of lilies on either hand invite us. Loveits sourceit bubbles up as a pure rill from the wellhead of Divine Grace. She loved much, but it was because much had been forgiven. There is no such thing as mere

natural love to God. The only true love which can burn in the human breast towards the Lord is that which the Holy Spirit, Himself, kindles. If you truly love the God who made you and redeemed you, you may be well assured that you are His child, for none but His children have any love to Him.

Its secondary cause is faith. The 50th verse tells us, Your faith has saved you. Our souls do not begin with loving Christ, but the first lesson is to trust Him. Many penitents attempt this difficult taskthey aspire to reach the top of the stairs without treading the steps. They want to be at the pinnacle of the temple before they have crossed the threshold. First, trust Christ for the pardon of your sinwhen you have done this, your sins are forgivenand then love shall flash to your heart as the result of gratitude for what the Redeemer has done for you. Grace is the source of love, but faith is the agent by which love is brought to us.

The food of love is a sense of sin, and a grateful sense of forgiveness. If you and I felt more deeply the guilt of our past lives we should love Jesus Christ better. If we have but a clearer sense that our sins deserve the deepest Hellthat Christ suffered what we ought to have suffered in order to redeem us from our iniquitieswe should not be such cold-hearted creatures as we are. We are perfectly monstrous in our lack of love to Christ, but the true secret of it is a forgetfulness of our ruined and lost natural estate, and a forgetfulness of the sufferings by which we have been redeemed from that condition! O, that our love might feed itself this day and find a renewal of its strength in remembering what Sovereign Grace has done!

Love in the narrative before us shines in the fact that the service the woman rendered to our Lord was perfectly voluntary. No one suggested it, much less pressed it upon her. It takes the gloss off our service when we need to be dragged to it, or pushed forward by some energetic pleader. Brethren, the anointing was impromptu with her! Christ was there and it was at her own suggestion that she anointed His feet. Mary of Bethany had not then set the examplethe woman who was a sinner was an original in her service.

In these days we have many inventors and discoverers for our temporal use and servicewhy should we not have inventors for Jesus who will bring out new projects of usefulness? We are, most of us, content to travel in the old rut, but if we had more love to Jesus we should be more eccentric and should have a degree of freshness about our service which at present is all too rare. Lord, give us the love which can lead the way! Her service to Jesus was personal. She did it all herself, and all to Him. Do you notice how many times the pronoun occurs in our text? She stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

She served Christ Himself. It was neither service to Peter, nor James, nor John, nor yet to the poor or sick of the city, but to the Master Himself! And, depend upon it, when our love is in active exercise, our piety will be immediately towards Christwe shall sing to Him, pray to Him, teach for Him, preach for Him, live to HIM! Forgetfulness of the Personality of Christ takes away the very vitality of our religion. How much better will you teach, this afternoon, in your Sunday school class, if you teach your children for Christ! How much better will you go forth this evening to tell others the way of salvation, if you go to do it for His sake! Then you court no mans smileyou fear no mans frown. It is enough for you that you have done it for the Master, and if the Master accepts it, you have the reward in that very fact!

The womans service showed her love in that it was fervent. There was so much affection in itnothing conventionalno following chilly propriety, no hesitating enquiry for precedents. Why did she kiss His feet? Was it not a superfluity? What was the good of it? Did it not look sentimental, affected, sensuous, indelicate? Little did she care how it lookedshe knew what she meant! She could not do otherwise! Her whole soul went out in loveshe acted naturally as her heart dictated. And, Brothers and Sisters, she acted well. O for more of this guileless piety which hurls decorum and regulation to the winds! Ah, throw your souls into the service of Christ! Let your heart burn in His Presence, and let all your soul belong to Jesus!

Serve not your Master as though you were half asleep! Do not work with drooping hands and half-closed eyes, but wake up the whole of your powers and passions! For such love as He has shown you, give the most awakened and quickened love in return. O for more of this love! If I might only pray one prayer this morning, I think it should be that the flaming torch of the love of Jesus should be brought into every one of our hearts, and that all our passions should be set ablaze with love to Him.

One thought more and I am done. This womans love is a lesson to us in the opportunity which she seized. She was evidently but just pardonedshe was rather a weeper than one who had learned to rejoice and yet for all that, she would serve Him at the first dawn of her spiritual life. Now, you young converts, no longer say, We will do something for Christ in a few years time when we have made our calling and election sure. We will wait till we have grown in Grace, and then try to do what we can. No, no! As soon as you are washed bring your offering to Jesus. The very day of your conversion enlist in His army, for speedy obedience is beautiful. Perhaps if this woman had lingered she had never anointed the Lord at allbut in the hot flush of her first love, she did well to perform at once this zealous, fervent act.

Young converts maintain, by Gods Grace, the warmth of the blood which circulates in the Churchs veins. Old Churches generally become diseased Churches when they cease to grow. I do not know a Church in all England without conversions which is at all in a happy spiritual state. The fact is, the fresh comers stir us all up by their fervor, their simplicity, their childlike confidence. Now, beloved Ones, we encourage you to show this. For our sakes, for your own sakes, for Christs sake, do not hesitateif there is anything you can do, though you are uneducated in the Divine schooldo it. Though there may be a dozen blunders in the method, yet do it, for Christ will accept it!

The Pharisee may quibblewell, perhaps it may keep his tongue from other mischieflet himyou can bear it, Christ will defend you, Jesus will accept you! And as a reward for doing what you can, He may be pleased to give you Divine Grace to do more, and may breathe over you a full assurance of faith, which, had you been idle, you might not for years have attained. And He may give you a peace of conscience in serving Him which, had you sat still, might never have come to you at all.

I beseech all of you who love Jesus, do not hide the light you have under a bushel, but come out and show it! If you have but a little faith, use it! If you have only a grain of faith, turn it to account. Put the one talent out at interest and use it for the Master at once, and the Lord bless you in such a work by increasing your faith and love, and making you to be as this woman wasa highly favored servant of this blessed Master. May the Lord give every one of you His blessing, for Jesus sake.

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OUR PLACEAT JESUS FEET   
NO. 2066

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, **ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, JUNE 8, 1879**

**At His feet.   
Luke 7:38.**

THE Easterns pay more attention to posture than we do. They are demonstrative and express by outward signs much which we do not express, or express less energetically. In their courts certain positions must be taken up by courtiers. Oriental monarchs are approached in positions which indicate the greatness of the king and the submissiveness of the petitioner. So, in their worship, the Easterns abound in postures significant of the humility which should be felt in the Presence of God. The most of us think very little, indeed, of outward postures. Perhaps we do not even think enough of them. Inasmuch as in devotion we think little of the position of the body, let us pay all the more attention to the posture of the soul.

And if it seems to us to be a matter of indifference whether a man prays standing as Abraham did, or sitting as David did, or kneeling as Elijah did. Yet let us take care that the posture of the soul is carefully observed. One of the best positions in which our heart can be found is at Jesus feet. Here we may fall, or here we may sit and follow excellent examples to our exceeding benefit.

The first thing that is necessary to spiritual life at all is to recognize the Presence of Jesus and to come into relationship with Him. To look at Him is salvation. As to look at the brazen serpent was healing, so to look at Jesus Christ brings life eternal to the soul. After we have come to look at Jesus and so there is a connecting link between us and Him through which salvation comes to us, we are described as being in various positions with regard to our Lord. We are on His heart. Just as the priest of old carried the names of the twelve tribes, so does Jesus carry all His people on His heartand that is where we are at this time.

There are favored times when, like John, we are on His bosom. We feel His heart beating with true affection to us. We not only believe His love but there is a kind of sensewhich I may not call sense either, for it belongs not to the grosser forms of sensationbut there is a kind of spiritual sensitiveness which causes us to feel that Jesus loves us. We seem to say, God is love, I know, I feel. For in our very hearts the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit. Then are we raised to His bosom. And it is a blessed posture to be in

*Oh, that we could with holy John   
Forever lean our heads upon   
The bosom of our Lord!*

We are described, also, as being in the hands of Christ. All His saints are in His hand. He gives unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, for He Says, none shall pluck them out of my hand. See your position in the hollow of His hand, while in the Fathers hand the hand of Christ is embraced and He tells us none is able to pluck them out of my Fathers hand.

Then, too, we are described as being on His shoulders. Does not the Good Shepherd, when he finds the strayed sheep, cast it upon His shoulders and carry it home? When Aaron stood pleading before the Lord he not only carried the names of the tribes upon his breastplate but he had them in of gold upon his shoulders. Christ carries us on the heart of His love and on the shoulders of His power. Thus are we perfectly safe.

You see, then, where we are. And I do not want you to forget this, while I urge upon all the Lords people that they should seek to be at His feet. You can keep all the other positions and this, too. Though that were impossible for the body, it is quite possible for the spirit. The highest delight and the fullest assurance are perfectly consistent with the lowliest reverence. You may rise even to the Masters lips, until you can say with the spouse, Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine. And yet you may still be lying at His feet, conscious of your unworthiness and bowed into the very dust under a sense of His love.

We must leave those other positions and consider the one in our text. And we have only two remarks to makenamely, first, that at His feet is a becoming posture. And, secondly, at His feet is a helpful posture.

I. First, AT HIS FEET IS A BECOMING POSTURE. This is proper because of the majesty of His Person. As He is Divine, at His feet is the creatures becoming place. Jesus is God over all, blessed forever. Let us exhibit the lowliest reverence whenever we think of Him. He comes very near us and we sing at the communion table

*His sacred name a common word   
On earth He loves to hear;   
There is no majesty in Him   
Which love may not come near.*

But there is majestythere is Divine majesty. Jesus is our Brother but He is the first-born among many Brethren. He has a human head but on that head are many crowns. He wears a nature like our own but that Nature is in union with His Godhead and we cannot think of Him without bowing with lowly adoration before Him. The sun and the moon and the eleven stars make obeisance to this star of Bethlehem. All the sheaves bow before this Josephs sheaf, as it stands upright in the midst. Jesus, You are He whom Your Brethren shall praise! All Your mothers sons shall bow down before You, for You are exceedingly glorious. Behold, every tongue shall confess that You are Lord and every knee shall bow before You. Therefore with glad prostration of spirit we bow at Your feet even now.

We may well bow at His feet when we remember the unworthiness of ourselves. We are insignificant creatures. That is saying little. We are sinful creatures. Even though we have been redeemed by His precious blood and shall never come into condemnation if we are, indeed, Believers, yet we were by nature children of wrath, even as others. Undeserved mercy has made us what we are. And if, even now, His Grace were withdrawn from us, we are fit fuel for the fires of Hell. There is nothing in ourselves of which we can glory. And, when we come near to Jesus, our place is at His feet.

There may be someno, I think there cannot be among His people any that would aspire to any higher position than at His feet when they think of their sinnershipwhen they even think of their wanderings since they have known His love, of their shortcomings and coldness of heart towards Him. But if there are any that can take a higher place, I know that I cannot. Oh, if I may but sit forever at His feet! If I may only look up and bless Him, that He loved me and gave Himself for me, it shall be everlastingly Heaven to my spirit! And do you not say the same?

Oh, utter nothingness, you are something as compared with us. For we are less than nothing! The blank of nothingness stood not in Gods way when He came to create. But in us there was an opposition to the Divine willa something, I say, which was worse than nothingwhich resisted our Lords Grace. But He has triumphed, and He has saved us and now it is ours, with deep humiliation, to lie at His feet.

At His feet, again, is a place well suited to us, because of His wellbeloved claims upon us. As many of us as have been renewed by Divine Grace we have been rescued from the slavery of Satan. And we have come into the sweet service of Christ and now it is our great joy to call Him Master and Lord. When we are right-minded we make a full submission of everything to Him. We place at His feet all our time, our talents, our substance. We desire to bring every thought into captivity to His dear sway.

Our ambition is that He would rule us entirely. It is a scepter of Divine Grace with which Jesus reigns over His trusting people, but it is quite as powerful as the iron scepter. Oh, that He would use it and crush our lusts with it and break our sinful desires with it like potters vessels, till we should be wholly given up to Him!

*In my spirit rule and conquer,   
There set up Your eternal throne;   
Wean my heart from every creature,   
You to love and You alone.*

This is the Christians desire. He would lie joyfully submissive at the Saviors feet, completely subjected by the conquering Lord.

Once moreHe is All in All and we would lie at His feet to find salvation in Him and seek it nowhere else. Perhaps I am speaking to those who long after eternal life and are crying after salvation. Come, beloved Friend, I do not know you, but my Lord does. Come and lie at His feet and cry, I never will depart until You speak peace to me. You are not far from finding peace in Christ when you are satisfied that you cannot find it anywhere else. When you are weaned from every hope except that which is found in

Jesus, you will soon have a hope in Him.

Come, lie prostrate there and say, If I perish here, I will perish at His feet. None perish there. Beneath the Cross, where the full sacrifice was offered, there I cast myself. I will never stir an inch beyond this. If the eternal thunderbolts can smite the Cross, they shall blast me at the same time, for here I will stay. At Jesus feet, I lie, in despair as to all else but with strong resolve never to go away from Him, resolved with Him to live or die. This is what I mean, then, by the posture of being at Jesus feet.

But now remember, dear Friends, that at Jesus feet is the position which the very brightest of the saints delight to take up. When John was in the Isle of Patmos and saw His Master whom he loved, he did not essay to place his head upon His bosom. Remember his wordsAnd when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. Now if such a one as John the Divine lay there, that is a high enough place for you and for me. At His feet. Oh, let us get there! Down, down, down, high looks! Proud thoughts, down with you! Legal hopes, self-confidence, down with you! Away, away, with everything that lifts up man. And may Christ, alone, be exalted while we lie at His feet. For if we do not bow willingly, we shall have to come to it by a humbling experience.

The Lord has put all things under His feet. Let us put ourselves at His feet. If we will not accept Him now to be our Master and Lord, we shall be flung into the winepress of the wrath of God and then shall He trample upon us in His wrath and crush us in His sore displeasure. God save us from such a doom and may we rejoice to be at His feet.

II. Now we shall attend to our second observation. We have shown, I think, that it is a becoming posture. But now, secondly, IT IS A VERY HELPFUL POSTURE.

Turn to my text and see that it is a very helpful posture for a weeping penitent. Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisees house, brought an alabaster box of ointment and stood at His feet behind Him weeping. It helps us to repent. Do not go and stand at Moses feet. You will never repent there. To stand at the foot of Sinai and tremble may have its uses. But Gospel repentance does not spring from legal terror. Gracious tears are wept at Jesus feet.

Oh, if you would have your heart broken till the rock shall gush with rivers of repentance, stand at Jesus feet. Stand there now. If you would have a tender heart, think of the Beloved who died for you! Think of how those feet were pierced. This woman could not see that, for it was not then done. But you can see it and mark where the nail has bored each blessed foot.

At His feet is the best place for a penitent, for it helps faith. For as you look down at those dear feet and think, He is God and He became a Man to suffer in my place and those dear feet were pierced that my heart might be delivered from death, you will find faith spring up in your soul at the sight of the great Substitute. Such faith will bring with it pardon. Standing at His feet, you will find Him turn His head and say to you what He said to the woman, Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you. Your faith has saved you; go in peace.

Repentance, apart from Christ, will need to be repented of. Repentance at Christs feet is the only repentance worth having. When you weep for sin, so that you cannot see Christ through your tears, away with them! Unbelieving tears are not such as God delights in. But it is a sweet, sweet thing to taste a salt repentance and then to taste the honey of a honeyed pardonto have the soul smarting and then to have it rejoicing, too, because it stands at Jesus feet.

And let me say to all weeping penitentsGet away to Jesus feet, because it is there your love will flow and there you will begin to think of doing something for Him who will blot out your sin. Did not this woman unbind the luxuriant tresses of her head to make a towel? Did she not, instead of pitcher and basin, use the fountains of her eyes, no, the fountains of her heart, with which to bathe His feet? And then for ointment she broke the alabaster box and kissed, and kissed, and kissed, and kissed again, those dear, dear feet of Him who had brought salvation to her.

O Penitents, I pray you stand not outside in the cold porch with Moses but come indoors, where Jesus welcomes you. And stand at His feet and He will give you that blessed repentance after a godly sort, which shall bring you an answer of peace and shall nourish life in your soul. At His feet, then, is a helpful posture to the weeping penitent.

Now you have got your Bibles open at Lukes seventh chapter, turn over to the eighth chapter and the thirty-fifth verse. You know the story of the man that had a legion of devils in him who used to cut himself and who lived among the tombs. Now we read, They went out to see what was done. And came to Jesus and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus.

At Jesus feet is the best place for a new convert. What a state of mind and body this poor man must have been in who was possessed of devils that carried him over hedge and ditch and field and floodhe knew not where! Men bound him with chains but like another Samson, he snapped them. He tore himself with flints and knives and thorns. Poor wretch! He rested not day nor night. And ever with his dolorous cry he made nights hideous, so that they that passed by the cemeteries startled, feeling that they had come near the gates of Hell.

A whole legion of devils dwelt within this poor wretch. And when Christ cast all the devils out of him, he must have been spent and exhausted, just as after a delirium there seems no life left. He wanted rest. Where was he to get it? He sat at Jesus feet. Do you know why he rested there? It was because he felt the devils could not press on to Jesus feet. He felt quite sure the devils would never enter into his body again while he sat at Jesus feet. Why, no, the devils had been afraid of Jesus and had gone into the swine and rushed into the sea to escape from Him.

While he sat at the feet of that great One who had rescued him from so terrible a fate, he seemed to feel, I am safe here. At Jesus feet he plucked up courage and gathered strength! With his new clothes on (he had not worn any for many a day) and his tangled hair combed out again and his poor face, that had been covered with filth, all cleansed again, I can hardly imagine the pleasurable sensation and the happiness that he felt! Except I remember how I have sometimes felt myself, after sharp pains and long diseases, when I have come forth to breathe the air again, free from pain. Convalescence is very sweet and fairly pictures how souls feel when they get Christ at last. He has saved me but, oh, I am weary, I am weary. I will sit at His feet. And as we sit at His feet, we feel all weariness pass away.

Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new. We see a new Heaven and a new earth and we are made completely new creatures. Where should we sit but at His feet who makes all things new? You that have found Christ and now greatly need rest, do not try to find rest anywhere but in Him. Come and sit at His feet. Have no more cries, no more fears, no more doubts, no more despairs. Christ has saved you. Sit still and remember what He has done and what He is doing. Sit still and look up at His dear face and say, Blessed be the altogether lovely One who plucked me out of the jaws of Hell and delivered me from between the teeth of the dragon. O dear Friends, there is no rest like resting at Jesus feet!

*Here it is I find my Heaven   
While upon the Cross I gaze.*

Now, turn with your finger a little farther to the forty-first verse of the same chapter and you will find out that at Jesus feet is a very helpful posture for a pleading intercessorfor one who is himself saved and is pleading for others. Behold, there came a man named Jairus and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus feet and besought Him that He would come into his house: for he had only one daughter, about twelve years of age and she lay a dying.

Many of us know what it is to intercede with God for others. But there is no interceding that is so efficacious as that which is done at Jesus feet. When your heart breakswhen you feel that you do not deserve the mercy that you are seeking forwhen, like Abraham, you cry, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes, it is then that you prevail. Lie at His feet. But do not lie there as if it were somebody elses feet. Let it be Jesus feet, the feet of your dear Lord, who came to save you. Lie there and say, Lord, save my daughter. Lord, save my wife, or, Lord, have mercy upon my wandering, willful boy and save him, for Your mercys sake. Plead with your whole soul. Plead importunately. But do not plead despairingly.

If you are at Jesus feet, you are near to the Fountain of help. You are near to Him who tenderly loves you, One who would not have had feet if He had not loved mankind, for He took His body upon Him out of love and His feet are a part of His frame. Oh, to realize the presence of Christ when we pray, for if not, we pray out into the open common, or across the cruel sea. I like praying right into the Mediators ear. It is grand praying when Jesus is near and you speak to Him as a man speaks to his friend. Thus do I pray nowLord, have mercy upon my congregation. Save the people. Lord, have mercy upon those whom I have prayed for many a time, who still are not renewed in heart.

We always prevail when we pray so. When I know that I have gained Christs ear I look out for the answer as confidently as I expect an answer to a letter that I send by post. Some of our prayers do not go that way for want of our believing that He is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. But when we believe that He will hear us, He does hear us. So, Jairus, if your daughter is sick, pray for her, but do it at Jesus feet. You have an ungodly relative and you have prayed often but perhaps you have not prayed at Jesus feet and I urge you now to try that hallowed place.

This fourth time will you turn a little farther, to Luke 10:39. She had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus feet and heard His word. So that at Jesus feet is the fitting place for a willing learner. A lowly sense of our own ignorance so that we do not dare to sit higher than at His feet, but a believing confidence in His infinite wisdom so that we sit at His feet to learn of Himthis is suitable. How much better scholars we should be if we tried to learn at Jesus feet! Some even of the Lords people are a deal too knowing. Many a boy at school does not learn anything of an excellent master, for he is conceitedhe knows nothing and he teaches himself.

I am afraid we are like that scholar. We know nothing and we teach ourselves. We have prejudicesopinions of what the Truths of God ought to be. This is evilbut, oh, it is very sweet to feel, I do not know anything. I come and take the Bible and ask it to photograph itself upon my heart! Some minds are like stained glass windows. They shut out much of the light and the little light that does struggle through, they color after their own manner. It is better to be plain glass so that the Lords light, with all its color and delicacy of shade, may come in just as it comes from Heaven, with nothing gathered from ourselves. Beloved, I pray the Lord to free us all from prejudice, from self-conceit and from opinions which originate with others.

We must learn at Jesus feet. Not at the feet of man, when man goes away from Christ. At times the Lord may send a man whom He teaches and what we gather from him may be Gods own voice to us. Still we must always be ready to discriminate between what the man says of himself and what he says in his Masters name. For there is a grave difference. At Jesus feet we must take up our seat. Dear young men that are beginning to study theology and that wish to become teachers of others, do not give yourselves up to any system and say, I follow this doctor, or that.

John Wesley is not our masterbut Jesus Christ is. John Calvin is not our Master, but Jesus Christ. It does not matter how great and good these men werethey were worthy of the love of all the Church of God but we call them not Rabbi. We may follow the man as far as the man follows

Christ but not an inch farther. We must sit at Jesus feet, humble, teachable, child-like, confidently believing what Jesus says but having no know of our owntaking it all from Him.

But my time fails me and so I must take you to the last instance that I will give you in Luke. Look at Luke 17and the sixteenth versethe chapter which I read to you. We find that the Samaritan who had been healed fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. Well, then, that position is most helpful to every grateful worshipper. I think I see the angels and the blood-bought ones commencing one of their celestial chorales. The eye of my imagination is almost smitten with blindness as I gaze upon the scene. They are all brighter than the sun and the whole company shines with the light of more than a thousand fold midday.

Hear them as they commence the rapturous strain! Their noteshow sweet, how seraphicas they praise the eternal Father and the glorious Lamb of God! We hear the song. How it swells! Hearken to the soft touches of the harpers harping with their harps! Do you note how the singers and the players of instruments seem caught up in the ecstasy? But mark! As the song rises they begin to bow. As it rises higher they bow lower and lower and lower. Hark! The enthusiastic fervor of their love has made them lift their loudest hallelujah.

And lo, they cast their crowns at His sacred feet! The whole company is still lifting up the song to its utmost glory but soon they fall on their faces, prostrate before the Throne. At His feet is their loftiest position. Let us imitate them, and making the worship more ecstatic than before, bow before Him

*Lo, at His feet, with awful joy,   
The adoring armies fall!   
With joy they shrink to nothing there,   
Before the eternal All.*

So let us praise Him for all that He has done for us. And, as we praise Him, let us sink lower and lower and lower, till in ourselves we are nothing and Christ alone lives in us. Let no thought of self, nor wish for self, nor dream of self intrude but let Jesus be All in All. At His feet. There shall our Heaven be found. When our soul is deepest bathed in grateful praise we shall fall down on our faces and worship the Lamb. The Lord bless you, and keep you at His feet forever. Amen.

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DEBTORS AND DEBTORS   
NO. 2768

A SERMON   
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, MARCH 2, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON.**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1883.

**There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.   
Luke 7:41.**

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

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

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

And the second is that some sinners are greater debtors to God than others areThe one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

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

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

But, as we have not rendered to God the obedience which is due Him, we have become further indebted because of the penalty incurred by us as sinners. All the Ten Commandments stand up in the court as witnesses against us, for we have broken them all. We have been guilty of sins of omission altogether innumerableand of sins of commission more than the hair of our head. We are under obligation to obey Gods command even though we are unable to obey it. Though we have not the power to keep Gods Law perfectly, that inability by no means removes from us the liability to do so. If a man is in debt and cannot pay, the fact that he is unable to pay does not exonerate him from the duty of paying. He is still in debt. Debts are not discharged by pleading that you cannot pay themthat is no valid excuse and we are, all of us, bound to obey God perfectly, notwithstanding all that has happened in the past. What a debt, then, we must owe Hima debt that is increasing every daya debt that is already past all reckoninga debt that will go on swelling as long as we live unless it can be removed by some power higher than our own!

That debt of penalty involves tremendous results to the body and the soul of man. Fear not them which kill the body, said Christ, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell. You know that among all the terrible words spoken concerning the penalty of sin, the most terrible are those which were uttered by our Lord Jesus Christ, the most loving and tender of all teachers. Measure not a mans true tenderness of heart by his avoidance of the subject of the wrath to come. It may be only tenderness to him, or a willingness to pander to the evil desires of sinful men that prompts him to such action as that. But the Christ who weeps over Jerusalem does not hesitate to predict its dreadful doom! And He who loved men so much as to lay down His life for them was the one who spoke again and again of the place where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. Many such words fell from those loving lips that never would have invented an unnecessary terror, so we may be sure that the penalty of sin is a very terrible one.

Every one of us who is out of Christ is under the death penaltyHe that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. The soul that sins, it shall die. And what that death involves, what that existence must be which is but life in the midst of deaththe life of an immortal being that is stripped of all possibility of well-being foreverI will not attempt to describe. But that is the penalty of sin and that is due to God, to whom we are debtors, indeed.

And, my dear Friends, it gives me great joy to add that if we are pardoned sinners, we owe to God a deep debt of gratitude! If, through the blessed processes of Grace, through the atoning Sacrifice and mediation of our Divine Redeemer, we are delivered from the debt of sin and the handwriting that was against us is taken away and nailed to His Cross. If, through the death of Christ, we are delivered from the death penalty of sinas we certainly are, for Christ has forever cleared all Believers by bearing their punishment in His body on the tree, then are we debtors to the Infinite Love and boundless compassion of our Covenant-keeping God, His well-beloved Son and the ever-blessed Spirit! In this debt let us be continually willing to sink deeper and deeper. I would that, in this respect, my own soul were like a boat that had foundered at seaand the sea should be the Love of Godand I would go down into it over the masthead till I was completely submerged in the abyss of Infinite Love. And, in truth, that is just where we are if we are in Christ Jesus! And each one of us, slightly altering the poets words, can say

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

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

So, you see, in some form or other, we are all debtors. I am not about to speak of that last kind of debt, now, for it is not included in our Saviors parable. But I want to speak of the debt of obedience which has not been rendered and the debt of penalty which has been incurred in consequence of our disobedience. I intend, as God shall help me, to say something about debtors. And if, in the use of the illustration, I should seem to utter hard words about people who are in debt, I am not meaning to do that and I hope they will not take it so. I am simply intending to use the illustration. If it happens to hit anybody, I cannot help that. If the cap fits anyone, let him wear it.

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

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

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

The sinner, too, like the debtor, is in great danger . I do not know what the laws of England are, just now, concerning debt. Putting them into very simple English, I think they mean that nobody needs pay anybody unless he likesand we have plenty of people who are getting rich by paying nobody at all. When they fail altogether, they break, and so make themselves. But I shall talk of the laws of England as they used to be. When a man was in debt in the olden times, he was always in fear of arrest. He could not tell when the sheriffs officer would lay his hand upon him. That is just your case if you are an unforgiven, unpardoned sinner. You cannot tell when God will arrest you, but it is certain that, sooner or laterand even the later will not be longyou will have to stand before His Judgment Seat and answer at the bar of inflexible Justice for all your sins against Him. I would not like to have been a debtor who, wherever he went, was likely to be arrested. I have heard of one who was so often in debt and so frequently in prison in consequence, but who so regularly ran into debt after he was let out of jail that, on one occasion, when his coat-sleeve caught on an area railing, he supposed it was the touch of the sheriffs officer and, thinking that he was again arrested, he exclaimed, At whose suit? It was only an iron bar that held him, but he imagined that one of his many creditors had claimed him. That must be a wretched kind of life for anyone to liveto be always afraid of arrest!

You smile at the idea, but if you were really in that condition, I do not suppose that you would smile then. And if you realized that at any moment you might be arrested by the cold hand of death, smiles would be far enough from your countenance! A man may be sitting in one of these pews and, before the clock ticks again, he may be in the world of spirits before his God! I am often hearing of persons, whom I have lately met apparently in robust health, who have been suddenly called away. They are gone, but we are still spared. In thought, I saw a procession passing before me. At first I imagined that it was flesh and blood marching down the street, but, as the procession passed me, I discovered that all who composed it were but shadows. I, who was looking on, am also a shadow and I, too, shall pass away. O debtor to a righteous God, this thought should cause disquietude within your careless spiritthat, at any moment, you may be arrested at the suit of your great Creditor!

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

There is this about our debt to Godthat it will never be forgotten by Him. I once knew a man who was much troubled by a debt, but his creditor was not, for many years had passed and he had never mentioned it. In fact, it had entirely slipped from his memory! I do not think such a case as that often happens, but I remember that onebut it will never happen with God. Nothing will ever slip from His memory! Sin is irrevocable and eternal. There is one process that can blot it out, or cast it into the depths of the sea and make it cease to bethere is but one such processand the Christ of God can tell you what that is. But, apart from His atoning Sacrifice, there is no hope that the debt will ever be forgotten or forgiven.   
And there is no protection for those who are in debt to the great Creditor. Protection is sometimes given to an insolvent debtor and, in the olden times, there used to be places of sanctuary to which men fled and so were free from liability to be arrested. Even now, men flee across the seas to avoid arrest. They cross the narrow channel that parts us from the Continent and there they are secure. But there is no such way of escape for those who are in debt to God! If you are one of His debtors through sin, there is no protection for you unless you flee to Christ! There is no distance of space or lapse of time, no repentance or tears that can blot out your transgressions. There they stand, indelible! Neither can you escape from the righteous hand of God in the day when He shall visit you for them.

This makes our indebtedness to God assume a very terrible shape and if we have not been delivered from it by Christ, what can we do? No composition can be taken in part payment of our enormous debt. Even if it could be, we could not offer itand there is no friend who can give to God a ransom for us, or stand in our place. No, let me correct myself. There is one Friendand never let us forget HimOne who became Surety for His people and who was made to smart for it in that day when He paid their debts, to the uttermost farthing, by laying down His life for them. But, dear Friends, if there is anyone among us here who is still in debt to God on the matter of obedience, and who cannot present to Him the righteousness of Christ on His own behalf and who, in the matter of penalty, cannot bring to God the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ, and plead that it was offered for him, his case is a very sad and wretched one, indeed. The Lord deliver all such in His great mercy! I have been speaking figuratively, but there is truth at the back of it all. It is no figure, no emblem, no fancy, but a dread and terrible reality, that all sinners are in debt to God.

II. Now comes the second thought which will have much soulsearching power about it if God the Holy Spirit blesses it, and that is, that SOME SINNERS ARE GREATER DEBTORS TO GOD THAN OTHERS AREThe one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

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

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

Some are great sinners because they are placed in positions of great trust. He who has but one talent can only sin with regard to that one talent. But he who has 10 talents, is 10 times as unrighteous in the sight of his Master. A man who is but a house servant, or a day laborer, may be unfaithful to his worldly master and, so far he will be wrong. But think of the position of a minister of the Gospel, the man to whom the souls of men are committed. If he is unfaithful to his Master, what terrible consequences are involved! And, as his reward is higher than the wages of the man that tills the soil, so shall his punishment be greater. Mark the difference of the sacrifice for a priest compared with the offering for a womans purification. She might come with a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, but not so the sons of Aaron! Their office was higher and, if they sinned, their iniquity was, in consequence, all the greaterand there must be presented, in the type, a costlier sacrifice in recognition of the greater guilt in their case. You fathers and mothers can sin more than your children can. Masters, you can sin more than your servants can. Men of wealth, you can sin against every pound you have if you use it wrongfully. Men who occupy high places, your sin may be like that of David, who greatly disgraced the name of God before men. Because of your exalted position, you can do so much more mischief and your sin, therefore, is reckoned at a proportionately higher rate.

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

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

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

Does this truth come home to the conscience of anyone whom I am now addressing? Then I go back to my preface, and ask such an one to say, with Simon the Pharisee, Master, say on. There is always a great intensity about sin when it is practiced for a long time. The sinner who is 60 years old is a greater sinner than a mere youth can well be. And the man who has spent three-score years and ten without remembering his Godthe man whose life lease has run out and yet who, all the while, has spent his vigor in the service of Satanhas become one of the greatest of sinnersone of the five-hundred pence debtors!

Yes, there are degrees of sin! Sometimes a man recognizes that he has distinctly sinned against God in an especially personal way. David seemed to feel his sin thus when he said to the Lord, Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight. Usually, unenlightened men think most of an offense against their fellow men. It is very curious that it should be so, but so it is. If I were to charge any man here with the commission of a crime against his fellows, he would probably knock me down if he could. But if I charged him with a sin against God, he would say, Oh, yes, yes! We are all sinners, and think that it was nothing to be a sinner because it was only against God! Thus men turn things upside down and an offense against our fellow man is reckoned to be a greater evil than an offense against the Judge of all the earth! But it is not so. It is that sinning distinctly against God that has the most evil about it and, therefore, it is that there is but one sin that is unpardonableand that is a willful sin against the Holy Spirit, one Person of the blessed Trinity. It is because it is so especially and so designedly against Him that no repentance ever comes to the man who has committed it, for he has sinned the sin which is unto death and he remains in his deathstate, so that he never repents of the iniquity and finds no forgiveness for it. Beware, I pray you, of sins distinctly against God, especially such sins as that of blasphemy, of murmuring against God, of infidelity, of a denial of His existence, of Socinianism, which is a robbing of Christ of His Deity and so of His highest Glory! For those sins which are most distinctly against God stand first in the dread catalog of iniquity. Remember how the Prophet Samuel said to Saul, Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Witchcraft was thought to be one of the worst of sinsand rebellion against God is put side by side with it.

And, last, I do believe that the greatest sin of allthat which, like a giant, rises head and shoulders above the restis the sin of unbelief, or rejection of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. If any man here shall say, I am no drunkard. I am no whoremonger. Well, Sir, suppose you are notbut are you an unbeliever in Christ? Then you shall have the same portion as they have, for, when God says, I will give My only-begotten Son to die to save sinners, and yet men say, We will not have Your Son as our Savior, but we will reject Him. This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ourswhen God takes out of His own bosom the darling of His heart, the very Glory of Heaven, and sends Him here in human flesh and blood to bear shame, suffering and death for guilty menand they say that they will not believe on Him, then this is the sin that turns the key of Heaven against them and dooms them to eternal destruction!

Remember the solemn words of our Lord Jesus, HimselfHe that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned. Listen again to these familiar wordsHe that believes not is condemned already. Why is he condemned already? He is living, he is laughing, he is sporting, he is merry-makingyet he is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. That is the sin which, above all others, drops the black wax upon his death warrant and sets the seal of Divine Wrath there so that he must die!

O my dear Hearers, our text says that one of the debtors owed 500 pence and, surely, that is the man who has heard the Gospel and yet has refused it! It is you who have been coming to this place, or to other houses of prayer, and who have been warned, invited and entreated for months and yearsI know not how longto believe in Jesus. If such is the case with any of you, put yourself down, not as a 50-pence debtor, but as a 500-pence debtor! No, I think I must liken you to him who owed his master ten thousand talents. How can you ever repay it? There is no hope of your ever repaying it. You can have it all frankly and freely forgiven! If you go to Christ and plead perfect poverty, you shall then be set free at once through faith in His dear name! But if not, you must be delivered over to the keeper of the terrible prison of which I spoke to you, and you can never come out of it! God grant that it may not be so with any of you, for His dear Sons sake! Amen.

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

Verses 13-27. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the Grace that is given to me of God. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. I have therefore reason to glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not worked by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ. Yes, I have strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another mans foundation: but as it is written, To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whenever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way there by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it has pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It has pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For these Achaeans and Macedonians had received the Gospel from the saints in Jerusalem. The Gentiles had been made partakers of their spiritual things, so it was their duty to minister to the poor Christian Jews in carnal things.

27, 28. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit. That is, when I have delivered the money, and obtained a receipt in full for it; when I have discharged my duty in this matter.

28, 29. I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ. He was sure of that, but he did not know how he would go in other respects. He did not know that he would go to Rome as a prisoner. He could not foresee that he would be sent there as an ambassador in bonds; and little, I think, did he care in what manner he would go, so long as he had the absolute certainty that he should go in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.

30, 31. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christs sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them in Judea that do not believe; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints. For there were some saints in Jerusalem who were very narrow-minded and who hardly thought it right to accept anything from Gentiles. They had not got clear of their Jewish bonds and Paul was a little afraid lest what he was taking to them might not be acceptable, so he asked the Romans to pray about that matter. Is there anything about which Believers may not pray? If there are, then we have no right to have anything to do with it! Bring everything before God in prayer, for all right things may lawfully be prayed about. So Paul asked the Christians in Rome to pray about that matter of his journey to Jerusalem and also to pray for his return.

32, 33. That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.   
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THE TWO DEBTORS   
NO. 3015

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1906.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGE** ON,   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, JULY 14, 1867.

**There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed one hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him more?**

**Luke 7:41, 42.**

[Other Sermons on various parts of this Parable, are as follows: No. 2,768, Volume 48DEBTORS AND DEBTORS; No. 1,739, Volume 29BANKRUPT DEBTORS DISCHARGED and No. 2,127, Volume 36LOVES COMPETITIONRead/download the entire sermons, free of charge at http://www.spurgeons.org.]

IT is not wise to compare ourselves with our fellow men. It is comparing one incorrect standard with another and is very apt to mislead. Still, as men will do this, as they will sail upon this tack, we will, for the moment, do the same with the view of correcting some of their mistakes.

I. The very brief Parable before us suggests four thoughts upon which we will dwell for a few minutes. The first is that THERE ARE DIFFERENT DEGREES IN OUR SINNERSHIPsome owe five hundred pence and others only fifty.

It would be very incorrect to say of all men, that they are alike sinful. That they are all guilty is true, but that they are all equally guilty is not true. There are persons who would contend very earnestly for this distinction because they claim to be among the better sort of sinners. They claim that they are not one tithe as guilty as many whom they know and that, in comparison with more grossly vicious persons, they are all but innocent! We will admit that, my excellent Friend. We will admitnot all, perhaps, that you would like us to admitbut we will at once allow that you are not so guilty as others. We will also admit that all sins are not alike degrading. There are vices, especially those which pollute the body, which manifestly lower men to the level of beasts, or worse than that, and we would not, for a moment, insinuate that our young friends who have been educated in the midst of godliness and have been preserved from any taint of vice, are so degraded by sin as drunks and revelers, the profane and the debauched.

Moreover, we are persuaded that the penalties of sin will differ and that, albeit all the wicked shall be cast into Hell, yet there will be degrees in the anguish of that lost state. Our Master has Himself told us, That servant which knew his Lords will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomever much is given, of him shall be much required. There are great criminals whose punishment shall be more intolerable than that of othersand there are others, who have not sinned to the same extent, who, though justly punished with Gods wrathshall not endure it to the same extent as those who have plunged more deeply into iniquity.

Thus we are prepared to admit that there are differences in sin, differences in the consequent degradation of sinners, and differences in the punishment due to sin. Our own conscience, common sense and right judgment teach us this, yet notwithstanding the admissions, I want to put a few plain questions to you, dear Friends, who think that you are among the fifty-pence debtors and who look down with some sort of disdain upon those who owe five hundred pence! And, first, let me ask you this questionAre you quite sure that you are the lesser sinners? Are you certain that you are to be reckoned among the fifty-pence debtors? Remember that we must always judge sin not merely by its outward appearance, but by the motives and character of the person committing itand also by the circumstances under which the offense was perpetrated.

Will you not all admit that a sin committed against light and knowledge is far worse than a sin of ignorance? If a man should offend against the law of the land, not knowing it to be the law, his offense would not be as gross as that of another man who, understanding what the law is, deliberately sets himself in opposition to it. It may be that some of those upon whom you have looked down as owing God five hundred pence may have been without the light that you have had. Probably the most of them never had the privileges that you have enjoyed. Did not your godly mother pray over you from your very birth? Did not your anxious father diligently instruct you in the way of salvation? You have read the Bible, you have a tolerably clear notion what is right and what is wrong, so you have sinned in the lightyou have sinned knowing it to be sin. May not, therefore, your little sins, as you think them to be, really be more heinous in the sight of God than those apparently greater sins which others have committed without the same degree of light and knowledge that you have had?

Further, must not sin also be measured by the violence which a man has to do to his conscience in order to commit it? To some persons, no doubt, from their early habits and even from their very constitution, I will not say that sin becomes inevitable, but certainly they glide into it almost by nature and without being conscious of any restraintor the restraint is so little that they scarcely feel it. I know that there are some of you who, happily, had to pull and tug against the bit and bridle before you could live as sinners. Conscience has so sharply pricked you and made you so uneasy in your course of life, that you have had to wrestle with your own conscience as a man struggles with his adversary. You have had to clutch conscience by the throat and try to throttle it and if you could have done so, you would have stifled, once and for all, that warning cry which became a constant nuisance to you. You could not sin with such pleasure as others could because your conscience would not keep silent, so, may not those minor offenses of yours which have been committed, notwithstanding the alarms of your outraged conscience, have had in them a heinousness which does not apply to the sins of others who have not had to contend against this inward monitor when plunging into sin?

Yet again, dear Friends, may not example sometimes have a great deal to do with sin? When I see some of our young people inclining to be drunks, I am very sorry and I blame them. But can I wonder at their conduct when I see how many parents train up their children as if they really intended to make drunks of themtempting them to drink and giving them their first taste of that which becomes a cause of stumbling to them? I do not see how, if it were the objective of some parents to make their boys drunks, they could act otherwise than as they now do! I have heard a workingman say to his son, when he has passed him a jug of ale, Take a drink, my lad, and he has looked quite pleased when the boy has taken a deep draught. And then he has taken him to the gin palace and let him mingle freely with the evil company usually found in such a place! So, is there any wonder that the boy becomes a drunk? Can a father blame his son for swearing when he is, himself, a blasphemer? No. And I say that people who have thus been in the midst of sin from their very childhood, may not, after all, be such great sinners as others who have had the very opposite example set before themand yet have committed these sins contrary to all the training of their early childhood. Some of us cannot recollect a fault on the part of our parents. Honestly looking back upon the private life of my father and mother, I cannot recall anything in their example which it would have been unsafe for me to imitate. Well then, if I have sinned, I have sinned against a parental example which I ought to have followed and, therefore, there must be more guilt in my fifty-pence sin than in the five-hundred-pence sin of others who have not had such an example as I had!

Do you not think, too, that circumstances greatly affect the comparative enormity of sin? If a thief steals a loaf because he has starving children crying at home, would you give him the same punishment as you would award to another man who steals what he really does not need and who seriously injures the man he robs merely for the greed of gain? You all make distinctions as to the motives which prompt to various actionsif you find that the motive, in one case, although not right, was more excusable than in the case of anotheryou judge the first one the more leniently. How do you know, my dear Hearers who resisted the calls of Divine Grace last Lords-Day, that you were not more guilty than that man who was not here but who reeled home that same night, intoxicated? You came into direct contact with Gods mercy and you resisted itand that is more than the poor drunk did! And as to some of you seat-holders who are constantly here, yet still remain unconverted though we have entreated you to lay hold on ChristI will not say it, but I almost think that your resistance of those continued invitations of Grace may have in it more of moral guilt, in the sight of God, than some of those offenses for which men are shut up in prison and are execrated by their fellows! Many people do not regard sins against God as being so heinous as crimes against men, yet they are even more so! And it is one of the marks of our common moral conduct that while a man may not be greatly offended if you call him a sinner, he would be very angry if you called him a criminal! That is to say such a man thinks there is not much amiss in having offended God, but he thinks it would be a dreadful thing to have broken the laws of his fellow men!

If you think these things over seriously, I should not wonder if anyone of you who at first said, I am a fifty-pence debtor. I thank God that there are differences between sinners and that I am not so degraded as other men areshould have to say, It makes very little difference to me after all. It is true that I have never been a thief, I have never committed an act of unchastity, I have been an honest, upright, respectable member of society, yet, as I have not believed in Jesus Christ and turned from sin, I may be among those who were apparently first, who shall be last, while some who seemed to be last, shall stand far before me. I shall not be sorry, dear Hearer, if that is the point to which you come. Indeed, I shall rather be glad, for it will be a more hopeful position for you to occupy than that which you once felt was your right place!

II. Having thus shown you that there are degrees in sin, I shall now pass on to show you that THERE IS AN EQUALITY IN THE BANKRUPTCY OF BOTH THE GREAT AND THE LITTLE SINNERS.

Neither of the debtors in the Parable had anything with which to pay his debt. And when God means to save a soul, He makes it realize that it has nothing with which it can discharge its debt to God. If any of you think that you can do anything towards saving yourselves, go and do it! But Christ will have nothing to do with you on those terms! You must be brought to feel that you are helpless, hopeless, lost, ruined and undone and that you cannot lift even a finger to save yourselfbut that the Grace of God must do everything for you, from the first to the last! And unless you are thus emptied, and humbled, and laid low in the dust before God, I see no sign that His Spirit is effectually working in you

*While we can call one mite our own,   
We get no full discharge.*

Both these debtors knew that they had nothing to pay. There are some men who are conscious of a great deal of guilt who offer to discharge their liability by their repentance. Oh, says such a man, I am very sorry for my sin and that sorrow will surely make up for it. My tears shall flow freely and I will deprive myself of this pleasure and that! Surely that is all that is needed. But the man whom God means to save knows that his repentance cannot atone for his past guilt. If I get into debt, it is no use for me to be sorrythat sorrow will not pay my debt! And as I am immeasurably indebted to God, my tears of repentance will not discharge that debt

*Could my tears forever flow,*   
they would not atone for sin! I hope you all realize the Truth of what I am saying, for if you do, it is a token for good in your case.

Some others, though they cannot pay the full amount of their debt, hope to make a compromise. They will do their best and leave the Lord Jesus Christ to make up the rest. They cannot offer to God perfect obedience, so they offer such obedience as they canand they trust that will satisfy Him. But a soul that has been truly awakened by the Holy Spirit knows that compromise is quite out of the question. The Divine declaration is, Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them. There is not a word about some things which are required and other things which may be excused. My dear Hearer, I trust you are convinced that no half-obedience can ever be accepted by God! If you are to be saved by your own works, you must be absolutely perfect in thought, word and deed from the moment of your birth to the hour of your death! One crack in the crystal vase of perfection spoils itand you all know that the vase was not only cracked, but smashed to atoms long ago. Do not trust in your own righteousness, but confess before God that you have nothing to pay off that terrible debt which you have incurred through sin.

Some men give their note of hand and promise to pay their debt . They hope they will be better in the future than they have been in the past. But suppose they are? They will then be no better than they are always bound to beand how can that improvement discharge their past debts? Try that plan on one of your tradesmen. You owe him, shall I say fifty pounds? Well, then, go to him and say, I cannot pay what I owe you, but I will never get into your debt again. Will that promise take your name off his ledger? You know that it will not! And so, even if you could serve God perfectly in the future, that would not put away your sins in the past! The fact is, these promises of yours are just like the paper money which represents no real security and so leads to bankruptcy. You may build up a nice-looking structure with promises of good works which you will do in the future, but it will all come tumbling down one of these daysand great will be the fall thereof.

This is the only safe declaration for a man to makeO God, I am deeply in Your debt and have nothing to pay! If You would save me through my repenting, even then, if You did not enable me to repent, I could not repent, for my heart is hard as a stone! Lord, will You not take away my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh? And, Lord, if I am to be holy in the future, it must be Your Grace which will make me so. I know that if I am ever to enter Heaven, I must be holy. And I also know that holiness must be worked in me by Your Holy Spirit. Consequently, it cannot be any credit to meYou must have the credit of it all. As for me, I am like the two debtors, I have nothing to paynothing whatever! If You send the sheriffs officer to take me and put me in prison, and tell me that I shall never come out until I have paid the uttermost farthing, I must lie there forever and ever, for I know that it is not in my power to meet even one in ten thousand of Your just demands. If you should lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, my building for eternity must be found wanting. Pull it down, Lord, and then build me up as You would have me!

We are all equal herethere is no difference. You respectable ladies and gentlemen are on a level with the worst villains in the land! My Lord, you are no better off, in this respect, than a chimney-sweeper! Your Majesty, even you have no preference, in this matter, over the poorest woman in your dominions! If you are to be savedhigh and low, rich and poor, you great and mighty ones, and you despised and abandoned onesso must all bow together here as you will have to lie in earths common grave! So must you bow down in one common lowliness of mind before your God, whose debtors you all are, confessing that you have nothing to paynot a single rusty farthing of goodness in the whole human race! Jew and Gentile must bow together before God, crying, Guilty, guilty, GUILTY! We are guilty, everyone of us and we have nothing to plead in answer to the demands of Your righteous Law. And even this confession, itself, is forced from our lips because we cannot help feeling that it is, alas, but too true. We are all equal here.

III. Passing on to the next point, we observe that when Sovereign Mercy dealt with these two debtorsthe fifty-pence man and the fivehundred-pence manIT PUT THEM ON A LEVEL, AGAIN, for their creditor frankly forgave them both.

The man who owed the five hundred pence could turn to the other debtor and say, I am out of debt, my Brother! And the other one could say to him, Give me your hand! I cannot say any more than you can, but, glory be to God, I cannot say any less, for I, also, am out of debt! I could not pay my fifty pence, so I could have been shut up in the debtors prisonand you could not pay your five hundred pence, so you, also, could have been kept in prison. And though I did not owe as much as you did, yet I owed more than I could ever have paid, so let us together bless the name of the Lord who has frankly forgiven us both because His only-begotten and well-beloved Son has redeemed us from going down to the Pit by paying all our debt on Calvarys Cross.

There is one word that I want you to especially noticeHe frankly forgave them both. By that I understand that he forgave them altogether because he willed to do so and not because of any reason in them why he should do so. Once and for all, he fully cancelled all their debts. And now, just as if they had never been in debt at all, he could not arrest them for debt and they had no cause to be afraid that he would do so, for he had no legal claim against them for he had, himself, by an act of Grace, forgiven them all that they owedand they were, therefore, clear. Ah, my dear Hearers, your hearts must leap for joy if you know that God has forgiven all your past sin! Sometimes, when we get to talking about the perfect pardon which we have received from God, some people say, How egotistical, how presumptuous you are! Well, we will be egotistical and presumptuous in that senseand the more we are so, the better will it be! Anyone who has believed in Jesus is wholly forgiven! Against me, if I believe in Jesus and against you, if you believe in Jesus, there is no sin recorded in Gods Book of Remembrance! It is all blotted out! If you could turn the pages over, you would not find a single entry of the sin of a Believer. In Gods sight, if I have trusted in Christ, I am as pure as though I had never sinned, for I have been so washed in Christs precious blood that not a spot or wrinkle remains upon me! And you, too, Believer, are not half-pardoned. Christ is not half a Savior to us, but a whole Savior! And the pardon which God gives to us is a full and final pardon. He does not forgive us upon condition that we do not go back to the world. He makes no such condition and He will not let us go back. He forgives us outright, and puts the whole of our sin away forever. He receives the prodigal back into His bosom and bids him sit at the table and feast while the music and the dancing make glad his heart!

Do you know, dear Hearer, that you are forgiven? Oh, says one, I would give all I have to know that. You may know it. If you trust the Lord Jesus Christ, that is a sure proof that you are pardoned. And you may live and you ought to live in a constant realization of perfect pardon through the precious blood of Jesus. There may have come into this place one who would not like his name to be known, or his character to be described. He has gone very, very far into everything that is evil. But he is now standing at the foot of the Cross and he is looking up to the Crucified Christ and he can say, My trust is in Jesus only. There is probably also here a young man whose life, from his youth up, has been most excellentnobody could ever detect a flaw in his moral character. He, too, is looking upon the wounds of Jesus, and he also can say, My trust is in Him alone. Now, these two persons are equally pardoned! That great sinner has no more against him in Gods Book than that excellent youth who is also forgivenHe frankly forgave them both nor forgave one of them fully and the other only partially, but, He frankly forgave them both.

My eyes glance here and there upon some of my Brothers and Sisters in Christ whose life stories remind me of the differences there are between themand also of the likeness which Divine Grace has worked in them. There are some here whose tongues were used in blasphemy not long ago. The drunkards cup was often at their lips and the drunkards language was their usual speech. But they are washed, cleansed and sanctified! And now there is no difference between them and those who were preserved from wandering out of the path of morality. No difference, did I say? Sometimes I think that there is this difference that those who have sinned much and have had much forgiven, are the warmest-hearted among us, the most faithful and the most earnest. So that if we, in our earlier days, seemed to excel them, they now excel us and we almost envy them their holy joy and earnest love to the Lord who has washed them from their many sins! Still, there is an equality between these two classes. They are both alike pardoned, both washed in the same precious blood, both clothed in the same spotless righteousness, both equally adopted into the family of God, both equally secured by the Everlasting Covenant and both equally have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! And they shall both equally stand at the right hand of Christ, wearing the white robes, waving the palm branches, and they shall equally share His victory as they sing, Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Fatherto Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

IV. Now, lastly, THERE IS ANOTHER POINT OF DIFFERENCE Which of them will love him more?   
It is quite certain that there are some Christians who love the Lord Jesus Christ more than others do. Some who love Him much while others only love Him a little. Shall I describe those who love Christ only a little? If I do, some of you will be able to recognize your own portraits. They come to the place of worship pretty regularly. They sing, but not too loudly, for they are afraid of being too enthusiastic. They seldom come to a Prayer Meeting and only occasionally to the week-night service. They take just sufficient spiritual nourishment to keep them alive! I suppose they are afraid of taking too much, lest their spiritual nature should become too vigorous. They do have family prayersometimes. They do pray regularly, but it is very short. It may be sweet, but it is certainly very short. They do some good in the worldat least, we hope they do. They could count on one hand all the souls they have ever brought to Christ and all the good works they have ever done for the Lord Jesus Christ might be recorded on a very small scrap of paper. Some of them are wealthy and they heard a man ask them to give a tithe of their income to Christ. They thought he was a fanaticthey never dreamed of doing such a thing as he urged, though they do, sometimes, give a sixpence to the collection! They like other people to be earnest. They do not object to that unless those people ask them, also, to be earnest. These little-loved people have believed in Jesus, so they will go to Heavenbut such a change will have taken place in them that we shall scarcely know them.   
I have seen whole congregations of this sort of people! I have preached to themthat was terrible work, I can assure you. I have gone home with the deacon and he has been a person of the same sort. He didnt care to know how the cause was getting on in London. Indeed, he didnt care much whether it was getting on or not. As for revivals, if you only mention the word in the presence of such Brethren, they say, No good ever comes of them. These people have had little forgiven, so they only love a little. They were never very great sinners and never had any deep repentance so, in their own estimation, they never owed Jesus Christ very muchthey are a sort of superficial Christians who will be saved, yet so as by fire.  
You hardly need that I should describe those who love Christ much those who delight to praise Him, to pray in His name and to do all in their power to make Him known to othersthose who give to Gods cause at no ordinary rate, and help us to fight Satan in no ordinary way and to spread the Gospel of Christ in no common fashion! Last week some of us were at a meeting at which there was present a dear Brother in the ministry, the very flame of whose eyes seemed to set us all on fireand when we have heard him speak from this platform, the very place has seemed to shake under the power of his fervent proclamation of the Truth of God and his impassioned prayers! A man who is thus all soul and all heart cannot preach lifeless, heavy, drugging sermonsand cannot bear to be with people who are dull, cold and heavy of heart. He feels that he has had much forgiven and, therefore, he loves much. I could also tell you of some godly Sisters who have given almost all their living to the cause of God and of others who give all their time to Gods service, having sacrificed everything else that they may devote themselves to the cause of Christ. These are they who love much.   
We have differences even in the ministry. We have some Brothers who preach twice in the week, and they get so weary that they have to go away for a long holiday. But there are others who can preach 10 times in the week, or who, if they are not preaching, are visiting their people from door to doorand yet they do not die, but bless God that they have the strength thus to serve Him! As it is in the pulpit, so is it in the Sunday school, and so is it with all classes of Christiansthere is a difference. Some seem to be all heart and others seem to have no heart at all. There are some who serve the Lord with their whole soul and others who give Him just the odds and ends of their time and strength. I pray God to raise up among us many Brothers and Sisters who shall be eminent for their Grace and consecration to Christ!

to   
What is the best way to reach this point? Not to be great sinners, but feel that you are great sinners! To have a deep sense of your own

sinfulness. If you have never plunged into open vice, be thankful that you have not done so, but regard your sin in the light in which I tried to put it in the earlier part of this sermon. Set a clear view of it till you are humbled, broken down and crushed under its ponderous weight. Then go to Jesus Christ with this load of sin and, trusting in Him, know that you are forgiven through His atoning Sacrifice. And then there will be a potent motive within you which will give strength to your entire life and put muscle, nerve, sinew and bone into your Christianity! Then will you sing

*Love I much? Ive more forgiven!   
Im a miracle of Grace!*

God bless this message to those poor trembling souls who are deeply in debt through sinthat they may see Gods way of forgiving them through the merits and death of His dear Son, Jesus Christ. And may those who are forgiven much love Jesus much, and may God bless you all, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: LUKE 7:36-50.

Verse 36. And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisees house, and sat down to meat. It was usually a suspicious circumstance when a Pharisee desired to be familiar with Christ. It might generally be suspected that he wished to entrap Him. Yet, on this occasion, if there was no real friendliness to Christ, there was at least the appearance of it. We see what our Savior did when the Pharisee gave Him an invitationHe went into the Pharisees house, and sat down to meat. The Lord saw there an opportunity for usefulness. He knew that He would have a good reason for speaking personally to this Pharisee, who, perhaps, was one of the better sort. At all events, our Lord felt that it was right for Him to go into that house, even if they did watch Him and try to catch Him in His talk. If there was hypocrisy there, there was the more need for His Presence, as Jesus Himself said concerning His eating with publicans and sinners, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.

37, 38. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisees house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. She was not a sinner in the ordinary sense of the word, but she was a sinner by trade, a sinner by profession. It always seems to me that in this description of her, every word is emphatic. There is much meaning in every separate action of the woman and, even in her little mannerisms, there is something that is instructive to us. Our Lord was reclining at His meal and His feet were turned towards the door, so that she had not to come far into the house before she reached His feet. And there she stood at His feet. Those are blessed words, at His feet. That is where we, also, should stand and weep. That is where we should sit and learn. That is where we should wait and serve. That is where we hope to live and reign foreverat His feet.

This woman stood at His feet behind Himas if she were unworthy to be looked upon by Him, but found it honor enough to be behind Him, so long as she was but near Himat His feet behind Him, weeping with sorrow for her sin, with joy for her pardon, with delight in her Lords Presence, perhaps with grief at the prospect of what yet awaited Him. And she began to wash His feet with tears. O sweet repentance which fills the basin better than the purest streams of earth could ever do! Then she unbound her tressesthose nets in which she had, perhaps, caught many a man when she had hunted for the precious life after her former sinful manner. But now she uses those tresses for something better, she makes a towel of her hair. That which was her pride shall now fill that humble office and even be honored thereby. And kissed His feet. Oh, the tenderness of her love and the strength of her passiona sacred one, not born of earth at allfor that dear Lord of hers! She kissed His feet and then she poured upon them the precious perfumed ointment which had cost so much.

39. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying. Well, what did he say? I think that if some of us, taught of God, and let into the secret of eternal love, had been there, we would have whispered to one another, What a change has been worked in that woman! There she is, weeping and washing the Saviors feet, when, but the other day, she was standing at the corners of the streets, in the attire of a harlot, plying her accursed trade. How greatly we would have rejoiced to see her! But it is only Divine Grace that teaches us to rejoice over even one sinner that repents and Simon the Pharisee appeared to know little or nothing of Divine Grace! He had, however, the good manners not to say aloud what he thought, but, he spoke within himself, saying.

39. This Man, if He were a Prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touches Him: for she is a sinner. Yet this Man was a Prophet and He did know who and what manner of woman that was who touched Him! More than that, He knew what manner of woman His Divine Grace had made her and how true, how pure was the love which she was then manifesting to Him! And He knew how deep was her repentance, how changed her heart, how renewed her entire life was. He knew all about her, but poor Simon could not know this woman as Christ knew her.

40. And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Simon, I have something to say unto you. And he said, Master, say on. Christ often answers people who do not speak audibly. He answers those who only speak in their hearts. So you who are silently praying may take comfort. If Jesus answers a Pharisee who speaks in his heart against Him, much more readily will He answer His own people when they are speaking in their hearts to Him! It was a hopeful sign that Simon used a respectful title in speaking to Christ and that he was willing to listen.

41-43. There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave more. And He said unto him, You have rightly judged. Now, dear Friends, I hope that those of us who have had much forgiven are proving, by the warmth of our love, how right was this judgment on the part of Simon. If you have had much forgiven, be well to the front in every struggle on behalf of the cause of Christ! Be well to the front, also, with your gifts for Himbring your alabaster box and break it for Him. Wait not for anyone to ask you, much less to press you, to give to Him who gave His all for you, but, spontaneously, out of the love you bear to Him who has loved you so much as to die for you, prove that you love Him most of all.

44. And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, See you this woman? Christ knew that Simon did see her, and that he had just been sneering at her in his heart. See you this woman?

44. I entered into your house, you gave Me no water for My feet: but she has washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. I became your guest and, therefore, as My host, the first thing you should have done was to give the ordinary Oriental hospitality of washing My feet. You gave Me no water for My feet; but she has washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. What a changing of places there is now! The Lord has made the first to be last and the last to be first! Simon thought himself far in advance of this woman, but now that Christ had explained their true positions, I should think he began to see that the woman was far ahead of him.

45. You gave Me no kiss. Yet that was the Eastern custom in welcoming an honored guest.   
45. But this woman since the time I came in has not ceased to kiss My feet. At best, you would only have kissed Me once, but this woman, since I came in, has never left off kissing My feet. With a sacred audacity of love, she has lifted My feet to her lips and kissed them again and again. So, see here again how the first is last, and the last first.   
46. My head with oil you did not anoint: but this woman has anointed My feet with ointment. That is a common custom in the case of a guest of honorable estate, but you did not observe it. Yet this woman has poured upon My feet the most precious form of perfume that could be procured anywhere.   
47, 48. Therefore I say unto you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. And He said unto her, Your sins are forgiven. There I see the clear run of the argumentthat she is a woman who has had much forgiven by Christ and that is the reason why she loves Him so much. But often, when an inference is very natural and plain, the Savior leaves men to draw that one for themselves, while He draws another. He puts the same Truth in another shapeHer sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. I am afraid that there are many professed Christians who must have had very little forgiven them, for they love Christ very little. This seems to be the age of little love to Christ. There are some few who love the Master intensely, but oh, how few they are! Some persons think they are only very little sinners and we are told, nowadays, what a little thing sin is, and what a little place Hell is, and what a very short time the punishment of sin will last! Everything is according to scale and it must be so in religion! As you diminish the guilt of sin and the punishment of sin, you also diminish the sense of obligation in being saved from sin. Consequently, you diminish our love to Christ and we shall gradually get less and less, I fear, unto the old scale, the old balance! The old shekel of the sanctuary shall once again be used by us.

49. And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that also forgive sins? Who is this who can thus absolve from guilt?   
50. And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace. Go home, good Woman, do not stay here and be bothered by these people. And oftentimes that is the best advice that we can give to new converts. There is a theological controversy raging and the jargon of the different schools of thought is being used by one and another, but, do go home, good Soul. You need not trouble about controversial matters. Your sins are forgiven you. Your faith has saved you. If you know that, you know as much as you need to know just now. Go home and be quiet and happy. Go in peace.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2873 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

WHO LOVES CHRIST MORE?   
NO. 2873

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 3,1904.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 3, 1876.

**There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing   
to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave more. And He said unto him, You have rightly judged.   
Luke 7:41-43.**

When we commence the Christian life, it is very natural that we should say to ourselves, We do not wish to be second-rate Christians, or ordinary Christiansmuch less to prove like the Laodicean professors, neither cold nor hot, or, like those of whom the Apostle John wrote, They went out from us, but they were not of us. I like to see the holy ambition of the young convert who desires to bring forth much fruit to the Glory of Godto love Christ much and manifest that love by every possible act of devotion to Him. Truly, my dear Friends, you need not be as your fathers have been, for we have often provoked the Lord and have many times done what we ought not to have done. There is plenty of room for improvement upon the past generation and we would earnestly urge those of you who are commencing the heavenly race to run faster than we have runto keep your eyes more steadfastly fixed upon the goaland to continue more resolutely in the right way than we have done. We do not desire that you should imitate our mistakes, or that you should fall into our backslidings. We wish that yours might be the highest conceivable form of Christian life and we know that if it is to be so, there must be in you intense love to Christ.

My objective, at this time, is to give some directions which, perhaps, the Spirit of God will bless, especially to beginners, that they may be taught to love Christ much and manifest that love as this woman did. It may be that some of us who have been for years on the right road, may also get stirred up to greater zeal and devotion to our Lord. Possibly, we may hear our Master saying to us, as He said to the angel of the church of Ephesus, I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love. If His Spirit shall make our love to burn more vehemently, we may be able to start anew and after a better fashion in the work and service of our Lord. This were a consummation devoutly to be wished.

With this end in view, I shall begin by speaking upon the fact that we must all be saved in the same manner. Whatever our desires may be to outrun others in the Christian race, we must begin by being saved in exactly the same manner as others are. Then, secondly, I shall try to show that it will help to increase our love if we have a deep sense of our own sinfulness. And then, thirdly, provided we have this deep sense of sin and, in consequence, possess a burning love to Christ, this will lead us to show our love very much as this woman did.

I. First, then, whatever our desires may be to serve our Master to the utmostto be in the front rank of His servitorsyet we MUST BEGIN WHERE OTHERS BEGIN.

There is the same door of entrance for us as that which was opened to the very chief of sinners, for there is no difference between one sinner and another in the sight of God, as far as the plan of salvation is concerned. There may be many differences in other matters but, in the matter of salvation, there is nothing which places one man in a different position from another, or which allows him to be saved in any other way than the one way which God has laid down for a sinners salvation.

You notice, in the parable before us, that both the parties were in debtthe one owed five hundred pence, and the other fiftybut they were both in debt. So, if some men have plunged into the grossest vice and defiled themselves, and polluted their lives, they are certainly in debt five hundred pence. But if others have been kept from overt acts of transgression, yet, since their hearts have gone astray from God and since, with their desires, and with their lips, and in many respects even in their actions, they have broken His holy Law, they also are in debt. Fifty pence, it may be, but still, they are in debt. There is not one among us who can stand before the Most High and say to Him, I owe nothing to Your justice for I have never infringed Your righteous Laws. Any man who would say that would be a liar, and the truth would not be in him. If we say that we have no sin, or that we have not sinned, we lie in the face of the living God and in the teeth of our own conscience, too! So, we are all in debt, even if the amount differs in each case.

We also learn from the parable that, although both the parties were in debt, neither of them had anything with which to meet the liabilitythey had nothing to pay. One only owed fifty pence, but, then, he had not the fifty pence. No, he had not even one penny out of the fifty required to meet the amount. The other debtor owed five hundred pence and his plight was just the same, for he had nothing to pay. It sometimes happens that the man who owes the most, has the most to pay, but it is not so here. He has nothing to pay. And sometimes the man who owes but very little, may be the one who has something with which to meet his obligations. He has pulled up just at the right time and though he is insolvent, yet he can almost meet the debt.

But it is not so here. He has nothing to pay. Neither of them could produce so much as a single penny and that is your case and mine, dear Brothers and Sisterswe have nothing to pay. All that we have, or ever shall have, is already due to God. If there were any assets, they would not belong to us and there is nothing in reservenothing that we can look for, that will drop in, towards the close of life, with which all our old scores can be wiped out. Under the Law of God, there is nothing for us but debt, debt, debt! And even if we had the power to pay our old debts, new ones would soon swallow up all our capital. But we have nothing with which to meet our old debts. 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 your neighbor as yourself, is still Gods daily demand upon us. And if we were able to meet it, it would not in any way make up for the deficiencies of the years that have gone by. Here we all stand upon an equalitywe are all in debt and we have, none of us, anything with which to pay that debt.

And here is the glory of Gods mercy in dealing with sinners who believe in Jesus. In the parable of the two debtors, we are told that the creditor freely forgave them both. He did not say to either of them, I will set you a certain time and you shall pay me so much a week until you clear it off. Oh, no, he forgave them bothwiped the score out altogether! He did not ask anything of them, for he knew that they had nothing. He forgave them, says the text, frankly, that is, freely. He did not forgive one of them because his debt was a misfortune which he could not avoid, but he frankly forgave them both. He did not look for any worthiness in either of them, or expect anything from either of them, but, as an act of pure gratuitous favor, because he delighted to show kindness to his poor debtors, he said, There, go home, both of you. I shall never ask you for the amount of your debts again. I have crossed it off my book though I have received nothing whatever from you.

Now, this is just what the Lord, in His infinite mercy, does for all poor sinners who come and trust His Son. He gives them a receipt in full, for there is One who has paid the debt for them! All glory be to His nameit has been paid in full! But, as far as we are concerned, the Lord does not give us pardon because of our tears, or prayers, or repentances, or even because of any merit in our believing, for our very believing is marred by unbeliefbut He forgives us freely. And He does not forgive us because He thinks that in the future we shall improve upon the past. Oh no, we are His workmanship when we do improve and it is He who must have the credit of our improvement. But He forgives us freely, according to the riches of His Grace, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin, and remembering not the wickedness of His people, because He delights in mercy.

Here, then, we are all on the same level and if any young Christian thinks that he starts with an advantage over others, he makes a great mistakeand he had better go back and start where all pilgrims to Zion must startat that wicket gate which John Bunyan describes, or, better still, at that Cross where Christian lost his load and from where he went on his way rejoicing! You must come down from that high horse, young manyour birthright is not worth a farthing to you, your church attendance and your chapel attendance are not worth a single penny to you you must trust in Christ just as a harlot or as a thief must! It is true that you have been moral and I thank God for it. It is true that you have been preserved from contamination with an ungodly world and I thank God for it. But, still, in the matter of the souls salvation, other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Faith in the atoning Sacrifice of Christ is the way of salvation for the most immoral and for the most moral, too! You and I, dear Friend, must go together to the Lord Jesus and see in Him the full Atonement made and the utmost ransom paidand then we must accept, as poor bankrupt sinners, the free gift of a full discharge through the Sovereign Mercy of God whom we have offended.

It is absolutely essential for us to begin here, for, if we do not start our Christian life rightly, we shall never make progress in it. If there is a mistake in the first course of bricks laid, or if the foundation is not well dug out, or if things are done improperly at the beginning, there are sure to be all sorts of mischief in the rest of the building. Therefore, I charge you, begin by coming to Christ as naked sinners needing to be clothed. Do not come to Him in the filthy rags of your self-righteousness, seeking to have a piece of His spotless robe of righteousness tacked on, for that can never be! If you think of passing your counterfeit coin with Christs pure gold, you are making a fatal mistake. I charge you to begin as lost, ruined and condemned sinnersfor that is what you really are. Coming to Christ like that and trusting in Him, you shall be saved, you shall be adopted into the Divine family, you shall be sanctified in Christ Jesus and, in due time, you shall be glorified through Him, and through Him alone!

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you how our lives may become more intense than the lives of many other professing Christians are through our love being more fervent than theirs. In order to attain that end, WE MUST HAVE A DEEP SENSE OF OUR OWN SIN. Which of them will love him more? I suppose he to whom he forgave most.

I can imagine someone saying, I was never, in very deed, as great a sinner as some have been. Must I, therefore, love Christ less than those who have been greater sinners than I have? Will this morality of minein which I do not trust for a moment and concerning which I do not speak boastinglywill this put me at a disadvantage in comparison with others? Shall I never attain to such love as that woman had who was a sinner? Listen, my Friend. Suppose that the man who owed 500 pence only thought that he owed fifty. He would not love the creditor, who forgave him, any better than the one who really did owe the 50 pence, would he? It was not the amount forgiven, as you will readily see, which was the cause of the greater or lesser loveit was the consciousness of the amountthe realization of its greatness, which would be the cause of the greater love! I do not doubt that there are some very great sinners who have been forgiven, who yet do not love Christ much and, on the other hand, there are some who, in the judgment of men and, perhaps, in the judgment of God, are nothing like such great sinners, who, nevertheless, love Christ morethe reason being that these greater sinners never had such a deep sense of the enormity of sin as these, comparatively speaking, lesser sinners have had. The question turns, you see, not so much upon the actual amount of debt, as upon the consciousness of the magnitude of that debtnot so much, in the matter of love, upon the indebtedness, as upon the sense of that indebtedness, so that you who have been kept in the ways of morality before you were converted, may rightly place yourselves among the greatest debtors and, perhaps, may love Christ even more than some others do who have actually been grosser offenders, but who have never been awakened to such a full sense of their sinfulness as you have had, and, consequently, do not think themselves to be the greatest debtors to God. It is, dear Friends, a deep sense of our sinfulness, coupled with the perfect consciousness of our forgiveness, that will work in us intense love to Christ.

Let me further say that anyone who has been forgiven very great open sin ought, certainly, to have the greatest and strongest motive for love to Christ. You cannot always tell how love comes into the heart. I do not deny the duty of love, but love does not come merely as a duty. You love your mother, or you love your wife and it is your duty to do so, but you could not be made to love either of them simply by being told that it was a duty! You do it because of the natural impulse within your heart which moves you to love. In like manner, love to our Heavenly Father and love to Christ is, no doubt, a duty, but it is much more than a mere matter of duty. That is a cold sphere for love to live in and she soon gets away from the polar regions of duty to the more tropical climate of the Garden of Gethsemane and the place called Calvary. She loves because she cannot help lovingbecause she must love! The gratitude within her heart is so great that she cannot help loving the Lord who has done so much for her!

I hope that is the case with any of you who were once drunkards, or who had lost your character, or who had sinned against God in an open way and even dared, perhaps, to blaspheme His holy name. As you think that over, oh, how your heart ought to burn with love to your Lord! You remember how Paul writes concerning adulterers, drunks and all sorts of grossly sinful peopleand then says, Such were some of you, but you are washed. This should bring tears to the eyes of all whom it concernsBut you are washedyou are singing your Saviors praises, though once a profane or licentious song would have suited you better! You are now bowing your knees in prayer, though once those knees never knew what it was to make an obeisance before the Most High! You are loving Him, now, with all your heart, though once you saw no beauty in Him that you should desire Him. Brothers and Sisters, I will not say that you ought to love Christ muchrather will I say that I feel sure that you do! If you realize what He has done for you, you cannot help loving Him much! And I trust that in the outpouring and manifestation of love, yours will be a life as vigorously good as once it was shamefully bada life as full of the fire of Heaven as once it was full of the fire of Hella life as much above the common life of men as once it was below what the life of men really ought to be. God grant that it may be so with you!

Now I will address myself to those who thank Godwithout any of the Pharisaic spiritbut very humbly thank God that they were not allowed to run into the same excess of riot as others, but were early brought to a knowledge of the Savior. I say to you, dear Friends, that you, also, may be among those who love Christ much if you have a very deep sense of sin. A venerable servant of God whom most of you know and respect, has made a remark which I fully endorse. He says that he has noticed that the deepest convictions of sin do not come, as a rule, to men of coarse life, but to those who have been of upright moral character. My own observation has taught me that, very often, drunks and other persons who have lived openly evil lives, when they are converted, are brought all of a sudden to Christ and made to rejoice in Himwhile some of us who were kept from such sins as they have committed, have had a far greater sense of horror and terror indicted upon us than they have ever experienced! I have many times found that the deepest sense of sin has been felt where the actual sin has been the least. There are, no doubt, exceptions to this rule, but I believe it is the ruleand the explanation is that the ungodly man, by a long life of sin, has so seared his conscience that even when the Spirit of God comes to him, he has not that delicate, acute sense of sin which another man has, who, by Gods Grace, has never been permitted to blunt the edge of his conscience.

I will tell you another thing. I believe that in many Christians, the sense of sin is much stronger 10 years after they have been saved than it is at the time of their conversion. There is not any despair mixed with it and the fear of punishment has gonebut a sense of horror at the terrible guilt of sin will sometimes come over a Christian who is far advanced in the Divine life. No, the further he is advanced in the Divine life, the more will horror take hold of him whenever he sees sin, even in others, but still more in himself! Some glib professors talk of having got out of the 7th of RomansI hope they will grow in Grace until they get into the 7th of Romans! It seems to me as if they were in the 1st of Romans, so they have a long way to travel before they will get into the 7th of Romans. The nearer you get to perfection, the more horrified you feel because of the sin that still remains in you! And the more horror you feel at your sin, the more intense will be your gratitude to the bleeding Savior who has put that sin away. And, in consequence, the more intense will be your love to Him.

I charge you, Christian people, if you want your piety to be increased, never to blunt your sensibility of sin. Do not begin to look at sin in any light which takes away any of it blackness. The devil himself is not as bad as sin is, for it is sin that made the devil. Satan was a holy angel until sin came into him, but sin itself was never anything else but sina horrible thing, and it never will be anything else but sin, look at it in whatever way you may! Some have spoken of sin as being merely a failure, or a slight slip. God keep you, Beloved, from ever using such language as that! Sin, in a child of God, is a damnable thingas damnable as it is most atrociously wickedand if it were not for the Grace of God, which takes it away, the brightest saint would soon be banished from Gods Presence. Sin is always an evil thing, but in a child of God it is a worse thing than in worldlings, for he sins against greater light and knowledge than they possess.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if you desire to cultivate, as I trust you do, the feeling that you owe your Lord 500 pence which He has freely forgiven you, you must often think of the spirituality of the Law of God. We think, at first, that the Ten Commandments only mean what we see on the surface. And if we have not broken them, we feel happy. Or if we have broken them, then we feel some conviction of sin. But the longer we live and the more the Spirit of God deals with us, the more we discover that the Law contains the condemnation of every evil thought, temper and imagination. Think, for instance, when we come to discover, in connection with the command, You shall not kill, that he who is angry with his brother without a cause is a murderer! Who among us has completely escaped that sin? Do angry thoughts ever arise in our heart? Ah, then we begin to discover that we have broken that Commandment and that, in this sense, we are murderers! And we find that there are more men who have broken that Law than have been put to death by their fellow men. It is just the same with each of the Commandments. I need not go into the details of them, but may the Spirit of God make

you often go into the details till you look into your own life and are horrified and say, Why, where we fancied we saw righteousness, we see ourselves altogether condemned before the all-seeing eyes of God.

If you would have a sense of sin, in the next place, endeavor more and more to appreciate the excellency of God. O You holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, when I think of some of Your creatures and compare myself with them, self-conceit may set my mind at easebut when I look up to You and remember that the heavens are not clean in Your sight, and that You charge Your angels with folly, I feel afraid to come into Your Presence! In the visions of the night, when we have thought upon the purity and spirituality of God, our hair has been ready to stand on end as we have realized how far we are from such perfection as Hisand we have been ready to cry with Job, I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. If the Holy Spirit will teach you to feel like that, then you will love Jesus Christ for having had pity upon you and provided a way by which all your sinfulness could be taken away!

Another blessed sharpener of our sense of sin is a consciousness of sins tendencyknowing what sin really is and what it would do if it could have its way without those blessed checks which Omnipotence put upon it. What would sin do if it could? What did it do when God gave it liberty? It took God Himself and accused Him, brought Him before its bar and there the sinner dared to sit and judge his Godyes, and to condemn his God and even to slay his God! This is what sin always does whenever it can. The foolthat is, the ungodly manhas said in his heart, There is no God. He means, No God for me. I do not need any God. If I could have my own way, there would not be any God. And every offense against Gods Law is a wish, on our part, to be greater than Godto have our way instead of God having His wayin a word, to push God off His Throne that we might sit there in His place! O Sin, I cannot but hate you, now that I see you red with the blood of the Son of God! I cannot but abhor you, now that I see that you would let Hell loose into this world if you could do so! A Christian cannot help hating sin in proportion as He loves God who has forgiven Him all His trespasses.

One thing which has often made me feel great tenderness of soul is a sense of the Divine Love. If you ever offend a person and that person, instead of being in the slightest degree angry, lets fall a tear, but says nothing. And if you hear afterwards that he has been laying himself out for your good and that the very thing about which you were angry was really intended to be a blessing to you, oh, you feel as if you could never forgive yourself! To do a wrong thing is bad at any time, but to do a wrong to the One who is so good and so kind as God isoh, have you not often said to yourself, How could I have done this? I am one of Gods chosen people. He loved me before the foundation of the world, though I did not know it. Christ wrote my name on His hands and on His heart and shed His blood to redeem meyet I did not know it. I even ridiculed His name and yet, all the while, He had prepared a place in Heaven for me and He had made up His mind that He would save me, that His Grace would seek me! I did not know anything about it and I went on in the frivolity and foolishness of my heart against Him. This thought makes sin appear exceedingly sinful, as being committed against a God who is all goodness and altogether love and mercyand so we feel ourselves to be indebted 500 pencenot merely fifty.

Above all, dear Friends, I know of nothing that can make us more sensitive about our guilt, and conscious of it, than the realization of what Jesus Christ is to us. I think this poor woman was helped to weep by the sight of His feet. They had not been pierced, then, but I know that it helps us to weep in penitence when we can see His dear, His blessed feet that were pierced for our sins, and look upon His hands and remember His words, These are the wounds that I received in the house of My friends. And then look into His side and see that the gash goes right to His heart and, all the while, realize that each of our sins became a nail and unbelief the spear to pierce His hands, and feet, and side. That wonderful love of Jesus Christ to us has never changed. It has never been repressed by our ingratitude, or made to cease even by our forgetfulness of Him. He loved us even to the death and, after death, He has continued to love us still! He loves us so that He cannot be content even in Heaven until He gets us there with Him. Being Himself there as our Head, He is determined to bring all His members there.

Just look at Jesus Christ a minute, and then look at sin. Oh, what a loathsome thing, what a monster it then appears! I am sure, dear Friends, if you are beginning to think little of sin, it must be because you have been thinking little of Jesus Christ. You cannot have met your best Friend lately, or else you would never parley with His enemy. O Beloved, lie in Christs bosom where all the sweetest perfumes are! Rest your head upon His breast where the myrrh, and aloes, and cassia are to be found and you will never crave the leeks and garlic of Egypt! After having been with Him and eaten of the heavenly manna, you would not be able to eat the dust and ashes of this foul world! So, in proportion as you get near to Jesus, you will hate sin and you will love Him who bore your sin, and carried it all away that you might be free from it forever!

There are many other topics I might mention so as to sharpen your sense of sin, but I pray the ever-blessed Spirit to keep your mind and heart sensitive towards sin, for you can be sure of thisthat you can never exaggerate your own guiltiness in Gods sight. When you have the lowest notion of yourself, you are getting the nearest to the truth. When you feel your sin to be exceedingly sinful, you do not even yet know how sinful it is, for

*God only knows the love of God*   
and God only knows the sinfulness of man! Perhaps, if any man among us could see his sin as it really is, he would go mad. I am persuaded that, sometimes, God spares men who have been great sinners, the horrible revelations which He gives to others because they could not bear them! If they did ever see themselves as they are, they might be driven to despair. So He sometimes leads them by easier ways than He does some others and He thus gives to others the opportunity of putting themselves down among the 500 pence debtors and to love Him more because, after all, they are conscious of having had the most forgiven.

III. My time has fled, so I must only say very briefly, in the third place, that IF WE GET A BURNING LOVE FOR JESUS CHRIST, IT WILL BE WELL FOR US TO SHOW IT AS THIS WOMAN DID. How shall we do it?

First, by desiring to be near Him. This woman, in her desire to be near Christ, came right up to His feet. Augustine admires the gracious audacity of this woman. She had been very bold when she was a sinnerher shamefacedness was gone when she was a sinner and it was also gone when she was a saint. May we, too, love Christ so much that we cannot be content to live at a distance from Him, but may we be among those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes and abide close beside Him!

The next point in her for us to imitate is the boldness of her confession. Some of Christs disciples came to Him by night, but this woman came to Him by day. They dared not approach Him when anybody saw them, but she cared not who saw her. I would that you who love Jesus much were as bold as she was in the acknowledgment of your faith. Come out and confess Christ, saying, I have had much forgiventherefore I will tell the whole world of what the Lord has done for me.

Then, next, this woman had deep humility, for, bold as she was, she rendered the lowliest service that she could to Christ. May you be such willing slaves to Him that washing His feet will be the work in which you delight! If I may but wash His feethelp His poor peoplelook after a few infants in the Sunday schooldo any little thing for Himif I can only have some smiles from Him, though they are only such as come to menials, I will be glad to get them.

Then, imitate this womans penitence. She bathed His feet with her tearsso you show Him how deep and true is your repentance. It is well not to make a show of repentance to men except by your actions. But let your whole life and your inmost soul make a show of it before Christ. Wash His feet with your tears. Refresh Him with your contrition.

After washing His feet with her tears, this woman wiped them with the hairs of her head. Imitate her self-denying service. Show your love to Jesus in some special way. I do not know what particular form your service may take, but let it be some loving, tender, self-denying work for your dear Lord and Savior. Make a perfect consecration of yourself to Him, as this woman did. May the Holy Spirit help you to do so! But you will never do it unless you have a deep sense of sin, so, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I come back to that point because that is the chief thought I want to leave in your mind. Do you feel sin to be a bitter and hideous thing? And do you feel yourself to be a great sinner? You will never pray so well as when you have a tear in your eye. You will never serve God so well as when you have been standing in the publicans place and saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner.

I am persuaded that we, ministers, do not preach with effect if we preach as if we were wonderful saints looking down on you, poor sinners. Oh, no! When we are, ourselves, tender in spirit, God helps us to be tender to the humble and contrite among our hearers! Out of our hearts, by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, comes power that helps others to be humble and contrite before God. We are nothing to boast of, so let us never boast. Though we are accepted in the Beloved, and perfect in Christ Jesus, forgiven, saved forever, (blessed be His name!), yet this is no reason for us to lift ourselves up, but to lift Christ up! It is a cause for gratitude, but not for conceit. So we will feel that we have had much forgiven, and will love Him much who has freely forgiven us all our trespasses. May He help us to do so, and His shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 116.**

In this Psalm, David tells us his experience with regard to God and with regard to men.   
Verse 1. I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Answered prayer is a good reason for loving God. David was in his right senses and he was, by no means, a fool, yet he declared that God had answered his prayers and, therefore, he loved Him. And this is not only Davids experience, but there are thousands of us who can say that God has heard our prayers and, therefore, we love Him. How can we help doing so?   
2. Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live. If a beggar in the street were to say to us, Because you have relieved me once, I will beg of you as long as I live, we would not be pleased to hear him say thatbut God loves to hear us say that to Him! He wishes us to resolve that because we have been successful in prayer once, we will call upon Him as long as we live! Now David explains the circumstances which led him to pray.

3. The sorrows of death compassed me. I seemed to be shut in surrounded by a circle of difficulties and terrors! The sorrows of death compassed me.

3. And the pains of Hell got hold upon me. They seemed to seize him as a lion seizes his prey.   
3, 4. I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech You, deliver my soul. His prayer was a very short one, but very much to the point. Words make not prayerthey often burden it, and prevent it from flying   
*Prayer is the souls sincere desire*   
and David, in a few earnest words, expressed that desireO Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul.   
5. Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful. All who have ever tried Him have proved Him to be somerciful to forgive our sinmerciful to help us in the time of troublemerciful to strengthen us in the performance of our duty. Our God is merciful.   
6. The LORD preserves the simple. Those who are of a single mind who have no double meanings and concealed motivesthose who know their own ignorance and weakness and who, therefore, dare not trust in themselves.   
6. I was brought low, and He helped me. David could speak for himself and he did so without the slightest hesitation. Can you, dear Friends, after making trial of Gods love and Grace, say of Him, I was brought low, and He helped me? If you can, then bear this testimony to His praise and glory!   
7. Return unto your rest, O my soul; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you. Mans soul is like the dove that Noah sent out from the ark. It flew over the wide waste of waters, seeking rest, but finding none, so, at last, with weary wings, it made its way back to the ark. And, Soul, you will never rest till you come back to your Creator and Redeemer! You may fly to the pleasures and follies of this world but they can furnish no real rest for you. If you would rest, you must come back to your God.   
8, 9. For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living. Let my fellow creatures think what they will of me, I will not care about their judgments, I will only think of God. This is the highest, noblest, happiest style of livingto walk before the Lord. Why, there are some men who dare not even call their souls their own! They are afraid of their next-door neighbors, or of some great kinsman who sets the fashion for them. But the man who walks before the Lord will think only of the verdict of the Most High and will care nothing about what men will say.   
10, 11. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, all men are liars. He felt that he could not trust them. He had come into such trouble that men would be deceivers even against their own will, for, even when they would have helped him, he found that they could not. He had looked to them as worthy of his confidence and had found them fail him. Therefore he said that as far as reliance upon them was concerned, All men are liars. Well, what then?

12. What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me? Though men have failed me, the Lord has not. If friends all prove to be false, He is still true. What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?

13-15. I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints. It matters not where they diein the dungeons of the Inquisition, or on the sickbed of poverty and obscurityGod is always with them. The deathbed of a saint is one of the places where God often makes His Glory to be best seen. From the lips of dying men and women some of us have heard strange sayingssweeter than any that ever fell from poets tongue or pen! We have heard words which it was almost unlawful for a man to utter, save only for those who were in the very suburbs of Heaven almost in Gloryeven while they spoke with us on earth. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. Will yours be a saintly death, dear Friend, or will it, on the other hand, be a death of gloom and sorrow? God grant that you may die the death of His people because you have lived the life of His people!

16. O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds. How pleased David was to be Gods servant! Yet he says, You have loosed my bonds. To serve God is to be free! We are never truly free until we bow our willing necks to the yoke of the Most High. Then we break every chain and snap every fetter. He is the free man whom our God makes freeall the rest are slaves.

17-19. I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the LORDS house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise you the LORD.

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BANKRUPT DEBTORS DISCHARGED   
NO. 1739

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1883, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And when they had nothing to pay,   
he frankly forgave them both.   
Luke 7:42.**

THE two debtors differed very considerably in the amounts which they owedthe one was in arrears 500 pence and the other fifty. There are differences in the guilt of sins and in the degrees of mens criminality. It would be a very unfair and unrighteous thing to say that all men are exactly alike in the extent of their transgression. Some are honest and upright, kind and generous, even though they are but natural menwhile others appear to be of a malicious, envious, selfish dispositionand rush into evil, sinning, as it were, with both hands greedily. The man who is moral, sober and industrious is only a fifty-pence debtor as compared with the vicious, drunken blasphemer whose debt is written at 500 pence.

Our Savior recognizes the distinction because it exists and cannot justly be overlooked. There are distinctions among unconverted men, very great distinctions. One of them, a young man, came to Jesus, and he had so many fine traits in his character that the Lord, looking upon him, loved him. But when the Pharisees gathered about Him, our Lord looked round upon them with indignation! The soil, which was none of it yet sown with the good Seed, yet varied greatly, and some of it was honest and good ground before the power of the Holy Spirit came to it. Sinners differ from each other.

But I call your particular notice to the fact that though there was one point of difference in the two debtors, there were three points of similarity, for they were both debtorsand so all men have sinned, be it little or be it much! And, secondly, they were both alike, bankrupt, neither of them could meet his debt. The man who owed 50 pence could no more pay than he who owed 500 pence, so that they were both insolvent debtors. But what a mercy it is that they were alike in a third point, for, when they had nothing to pay, their creditor, frankly forgave them both! Oh, my dear Hearers, we are all alike in the first two things! Oh that we might be, all of us, alike in this last point, that the Lord our God may grant to every one of us the free remission of sins according to the riches of His Grace through Christ Jesus!

Why should it not be so, since Jesus is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins? There is forgiveness with God! He delights in mercy! He can cast all our sins into the depths of the sea that they may not be mentioned against us any more forever! While we are compelled to go together two-thirds of the road, what a pity it would be that we should be divided in the third portion of it! That first two-thirds of the road is a very muddy, baggy piece of way and we sorrowfully wade along it in companyall in debt and all of us unable to pay!

But that next part of the road is well-made, smooth and good for travelersand it leads into the gardens of happiness! Oh that we may traverse it and find the free pardon of God! Oh for free remission for all of us without exception! Why not? May God send it of His great mercy at this good hour! To that end I wish to speak with you, dear Friends, for I believe that the Lord Jesus has something to say to you, and I pray that your hearts may be open to Him, crying gladly, Master, say on!

Our first point for consideration is their bankruptcythey had nothing to pay. The second is their free dischargeHe frankly forgave them both. And the third is the connection between these two things, for that little word, when, marks the connectionwhen they had nothing to pay, He frankly forgave them both.

I. First, let us think of THEIR BANKRUPTCY. This was their condition. They were unquestionably in debt. If they could have disputed the creditors claim, no doubt they would have done so. If they could have pleaded that they were never indebted, or that they had already paid, no doubt they would have been glad to have done so. But they could not raise a questiontheir debt could not be denied. Another fact was also clear to them, namely, that they had nothing to pay with. No doubt they had made a diligent search. They had turned out their pockets, their cash boxes, their lockersand they had found nothingthey had looked for their household goods, but these had vanished, piece by piece.

They had nothing at home or abroad that they could dispose of. Things had come to such a pass with them that they had neither stock nor money, nor anything in prospect which they could draw uponthey were brought to the last extremityreduced to absolute beggary. Meanwhile, their great creditor was pressing them for settlement. That idea lies in the heart of the text. The creditor had evidently brought his overdue accounts and had said to them, These claims must be met. There must be an end to this state of affairs; your accounts must be discharged. They were brought to this conditionthey must confess the debt and they must also humbly acknowledge that they had nothing to pay it withthe time for payment had come and it found them without a penny. No condition could be more wretched.

So far I have stated the parable and it most truly sets forth the condition of every man who has not come to Jesus Christ and so received the frank forgiveness of his sins. Upon this we will enlarge. We are all, by nature and by practice, plunged in debtand this is the way in which we came to be sohear it and mark it well! As Gods creatures we, from the very first, owed to Him the debt of obedience. We were bound to obey our Maker! It is He that made us, not we, ourselves, and we were, therefore, bound reverently to recognize our Creator, affectionately to worship Him and dutifully to serve Him. This is an obligation so natural and reasonable that nobody can dispute it!

If you are the creatures of God, there is nothing more right than that you should honor Him. If you daily receive the breath in your nostrils and the food that you eat from Him, then you are bound to Him by the ties of gratitude and should do His will. But, dear Friends, we have not done His will! We have left undone the things we ought to have done and we have done the things we ought not to have doneand so we have come, in a second sense, into His debt! We now stand liable to penalty, yes, we are already condemned! There is due from us to God, in vindication of His broken Law, both suffering and deathand in the Word of God we find that the righteous penalty for sin is something utterly overwhelming! Fear Him, says Christ, who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.

Yes, I say unto you, fear Him! Very terrible are the metaphors and symbols by which the Holy Spirit sets forth the misery of a soul upon which the Lord pours forth His fiery indignation! The pain of loss and pain of woe which sin, at last, brings upon guilty men are inconceivablethey are called the terrors of the Lord. There is not one among us, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, but owes to Gods Law a debt which eternity cannot fully meet, even though it is crowded with agonizing regrets! A life of forgetfulness of God and breaking of His Law must be recompensed by a future life of punishment! That is where we standcan any man be at rest while this is his condition before God? We are debtorsthe debt is overwhelmingit brings with it consequences tremendous to the last degree! And we are utterly unable to make any amends for this.

If He should meet with us and call us to account, we cannot repay Him one pence of a thousand. We cannot excuse ourselves and we cannot, by any possibility, render to Him His righteous due. If any think they can, let me remind them of this, that to cancel the debt which we owe to God we must pay it all! God demands, righteously demands from us the keeping of His entire Law. He tells us that he that is guilty in one point is guilty in all pointsfor Gods Law is like a fair vase of alabaster, lovely in its entirenessbut if it is chipped in any part, it may not be presented in His court. The least flaw in it mars its perfection and destroys its value. A perfect obedience to a perfect Law is that which is required by the justice of the Most Highand is there any one of us who can render it, or who can attempt to pay the penalty due for not rendering it?

Our inability to obey comes of our own fault and is part of our crime. Ah me! May none of us ever have to bear the penalty! To be banished from His Presence and from the glory of His power! To be cast away from all hope and light and joy forever! Why, there are those at this moment in the abyss of woe who have for thousands of years endured the heavy hand of justice and yet their debt remains unpaid, even now, for they have yet to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ at the Last Day and answer for their transgressions! It is certain that to meet the whole payment is impossible! Neither in the form of obedience, nor in the form of penalty may we ever hope to pay itit would be all in vain to make the attempt.

Remember, too, that if there is anything that we can do for God in the way of obedience, it is already due to Him. All that I can do, if I love God with all my heart and soul and strength, and my neighbor as myself, throughout the rest of my life, is already due to GodI shall but be discharging new duties as they occurhow will this affect old disobediences? In what way can I cleanse myself from my former stains by the resolve that I will not be defiled with fresh ones? If your hands are blood red, can you make them clean by the mere resolution that you will not plunge them, again, into the dye? You know it is not sopast sin cannot be removed by future carefulness

*Could my tears forever flow,   
Could my zeal, no respite know.   
All for sin could not atone,   
Christ must save, and Christ alone.*

We have nothing with which to meet our liabilities because everything that we can possibly earn or obtain in the future is already dueso we have nothing left unmortgaged, nothing of our own.

Moreover, the debt is immense and incalculable! Fifty pence is but a poor representation of what the most righteous person owes. Five hundred pence is but an insignificant sum compared with the transgressions of the greater offenders. Oh, Friends, when I think of my life, it seems to be like the sea, made up of innumerable waves of sin; or like the seashore, constituted of sands that cannot be weighed nor counted! My faults are utterly innumerable and each one deserving eternal death! Our sins, our heavy sins, sins against light and knowledge; our foul sins, our repeated sins, our aggravated sins, our sins against our parents, our sins against all our relationships, our sins against our God, our sins with the body, our sins with the mind, our sins of forgetfulness, our sins of thought, our sins of imaginationwho can make them right? Who knows the number of his trespasses?

Now, to think that we can ever meet such a debt is, indeed, to bolster up ourselves with a notion that is utterly absurdwe have nothing with which to pay! Moreover, I go a little further. Even if these sins were somewhat within reach to pay backif we were not indebted for the future as to all we can do, yet what is there that we can do? Does not Paul say of himself that he was not sufficient to think anything of himself? Did not the Lord tell His Israel of old, From Me is your fruit found? Did not Jesus say to His disciples and even to His Apostles, Without Me you can do nothing? Then, O bankrupt Sinner, what is there good that you can do? You must, first of all, get the good work from God before you can perform it!

It is true you are to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, but what must come first? Read the passage, For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. If the Lord does not work salvation in us, we cannot work it out! Every good thing in man is the work of God, the produce of the Spirit of God operating upon the heart and mind. Men are dead in trespasses and sins; dead to all that is holy and acceptable with God and life, itself, is a gift. What, then, can sinners do? Their bankruptcy is utter and entireand this is true of every man that is still out of Christhe is a debtor and he has nothing to pay. This being the case, I want to spend a minute in noticing certain temptations to which all bankrupt sinners are subject.

One of these is to try and forget their spiritual estate altogether. Some of you here, today, have never given serious thought to your souls and to your condition before God. It is an unpleasant subject. You suspect that it would be still more unpleasant if you looked into it. You want amusement, something to while away the time because you do not care to examine the state of your heart before God. Solomon exhorts the diligent man to know the state of his flocks and look well to his herds. But he that is careless and idle would rather leave such enquiries and let things go as they please. The man who is going backward in business has no pleasure in taking stock. Oh, he says, dont bring me my books; I shall not sleep at night if I look into them. He knows that he is sinking lower and lower and will soon be a ruined manand the only way in which he can endure his life is to drive dull care away by drink, or company, or idle amusement.

He labors to beguile the hours that he may conceal from himself his true condition. But what a fool he is! Would it not be infinitely wiser if he would look things in the face and have it out and know his actual state? Such ignorance as he chooses is not bliss to a right-hearted man, but suspense and misery. I have often prayed this prayerLord, let me know the very worst of my case, for I do not wish to entertain a hope that will, at last, deceive me. Disappointment will be bitter in proportion as false hope was sweet. This is the temptation of the bankrupt soulto shut its eyes to the unwelcome Truths of God. The ostrich is fabled, when hunted, to bury its head in the sand, and conceive that the hunter is gone when he is no longer seen. But he is

not gonethe unseen danger is quite as real as if it stared us in the face. However forgetful you may be, God does not forget your sins!

Another temptation to a man in this condition is to make as good a show as he can. A man who is very near bankruptcy is often noticed for the dash he cuts. What a horse he drives as he comes up to business! What fashionable parties he gives! Just so. He desires to keep up his credit as long as he can. He is going to make a smash of it, by-and-by, but for a season he assumes the airs of my lord and everybody near him imagines that he has money enough and to spare! The governor of a besieged city threw loaves of bread over the wall to the besiegers, to make them believe that the citizens had such large supplies that they could afford to throw them awayyet they were starving all the while! There are some men of like mannersthey have nothing that they can offer to God, but they exhibit a glittering self-righteousness! Oh, they have been so good, such superior people, so praiseworthy from their youth up!

They never did anything much amissthere may be a little speck here and there upon their garmentsbut that will brush off when it is dry. They make a fair show in the flesh with morality and formality and a smattering of generosity. Besides, they profess to be religiousthey attend worship services and pay their quota of the expenses. Who could find any fault with such good people? Just so, this profession is the fine horse and trap with which they, too, are cutting a dash just before going through the courts! There is nothing at all in you and there never was, if you are as nature has made youwhy, then, do you try to brazen it out and make yourself to seem something when you are nothing? You may, by this means, deceive yourself, but certainly you will not deceive God!

Another temptation which lurks in the way of a bankrupt sinner is that of making promises of what he will do. Men in debt are generally very promising menthey will pay next week for certain, but when next week comes, they meant the next week further onand then payment shall be doubly certain! Yet they put in no appearance, even then, or, if they do, they give an IOU. Is not that a precious document? Is it not as good as the money itself? They evidently think so, for they feel quite as easy as if they had really paid the debt! But when the IOU falls due, what then? It falls, never to rise again! Ah me, an IOU is often just a lie with a stamp on it! So will debtors go on as long as they can. This is what every sinner does before he becomes cleared by the Sovereign Grace of God.

He cries, I mean to do better. Never mind. Tell us no more what you mean to do, but do it! To promise and vow so falsely is only adding to your sins! Oh! But you know I do not intend to go on in this way always! It is a long lane that has no turning. I shall pull up short, one of these days, and then you will see. What shall we see? What we shall see will not be much! We shall see the dew of promise disappear and the morning cloud of resolution pass away. Dear Sir, you cannot raise our hopes. Neither God nor man will trust youyou have promised these 20 years and in no one year have you made a real move in the right direction! You have not lied unto men, only, but unto Godand how will you answer for it? Know you not that every promise that you make to God which you do not keep is a great addition to your transgressions and helps to fill up the measure of your iniquities? Give up the way of lying, I pray you!

Another temptation is always to ask for more timeas if this was all that was needed. When the debtor, in another parable, was arrested, he said to his creditor, Have patience with me, and I will pay you all. We cannot pay any of our debt, today, and dote upon tomorrow. Yes, it does seem such a relief to get a little longer timesomehow a vague shadowy hope seems to pervade the months to come. The sinner cries, Go your way this time! When I have a convenient season, I will call for you. It is not convenient just now, but wait a little bita suitable hour will come. With this temptation, Satan has destroyed multitudes of men, tempting them to ask for more time, instead of coming up to the mark at once and asking for immediate pardon.

What are the fabled virtues of tomorrow? Why do men dote upon the unknown future? To an immediate decision I would press you at this moment and may God, by His Divine Spirit, deliver you as a bird from the hand of the fowler, that you may no longer procrastinate and waste your life in disobedient delay! This being the temptation, let me hint to those of you who are bankrupt, what your wisdom is. It is your wisdom to face the business of your soul. Your soul-matters are the most important things you will ever have on hand, for when your wealth must be left and your estate shall see you no moreand when your body is deadyour soul will still be living in eternal happiness or endless woe! Therefore, do not neglect your state in reference to God. It is the most important matter! Give it the first place.

Settle this business before you attend to anything else. Take care that you face it like an honest man and not as one who makes the best of a bad story! It may be bad, yet the best thing you can do is to go right through with it in truth and soberness before the Lord. Hope lies that way. Do not let your danger be concealed like a thief who hides in the good mans pantry till the hour to rob his house. Suffer not the sparks to smolder where they may consume your all! Quench the fire before you sleep! When you face the matter, be very true and sincere with yourself and with God because you are not dealing with creditors who may be cheated, but you are dealing with GOD who knows the secret thoughts and intents of your heart.

Before God nothing but truth can stand! The painted hypocrite is spied out immediately. The Lord takes off all masks and men stand before Him as they really arenot as they would seem to beso be true with yourself! Do not take your pen and write down 50 if you owe 100, but put the fair number down. Tricks and falsehoods had better be put away, once and for all, when you deal with God. One thing moreit will be your wisdom to give up all attempts to payyou have nothing to pay with! Do not delude yourself into the idea that you will pay, one day, for you never will. Do not make the slightest attempt at paying, for you cannot do it! But take quite another courseplead absolute poverty and appeal to mercy! Say, Lord, I have nothing, I am nothing, I can do nothing. I must throw myself upon Your Grace.

Of this Grace I am now going to speak. May I so speak as to encourage you who are bankrupts to come to the Lord, that He may frankly forgive you all.

II. Our second head is THEIR FREE DISCHARGE. He frankly forgave them both. What a blessing they obtained by facing the matter! These two poor debtors, when they went into the office, were trembling from head to foot, for they had nothing with which to pay and were deeply involved. But look! They come out with light hearts, for the debt is all disposed of; the bills are receipted; the records are destroyed! Even thus the Lord has blotted out the handwriting that was against us and has taken it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross. In this free discharge I admire, first of all, the goodness of the great Creditor. What a gracious heart He had! What kindness He showed! He said, Poor souls, you can never repay Me, but you need not be cast down because of it, for I freely cancel your debts. Oh, the goodness of it! Oh, the largeness of the heart of God!

I was reading of Caesar the other day. He had been at fierce war with Pompey and, at last, he conquered him. And when he conquered him, he found among the spoil Pompeys private cabinet in which were contained letters from the various noblemen and senators of Rome who had sided with him. In many a letter there was fatal evidence against the most eminent Romans. But what did Caesar do? He destroyed every document! He would have no knowledge of his enemies, for he freely forgave them and wished to know no more. In this, Caesar proved that he was fit to govern the nation. But look at the splendor of God when He puts all our sins into one cabinet and then destroys the whole! If the sins of His people are sought for, they cannot, now, be found! He will never mention them against us any more. Oh, the goodness of the infinite God, whose mercy endures forever! Bow before that goodness with joy!

But, then, observe the freeness of itHe frankly forgave them both. They did not stand there and say, Oh, good Sir, we cannot pay, and plead and beg, as for their lives. But he freely said to them, You cannot pay, but I can forgive. You ought never to have got into my debt and you ought not to have broken your promises to me; but behold, I make an end of all this weary businessI freely blot out all your obligations! Did not this open a fountain in their eyes? Did they not hasten home to their wives and children and tell them that they were out of debt, for the beloved creditor had forgiven it all most freely?

This is a fair picture of the Grace of God! When a poor bankrupt sinner comes to Him, He says, I forgive you freelyyour offense is all gone. I do not want you to earn a pardon by your tears, prayers and anguish of soul. You have not to make Me merciful, for I am already merciful and My dear Son, Jesus Christ, has made such a propitiation that I can be just and yet can forgive you all this debt. Therefore, go in peace. Furthermore, this debt was fully discharged. The creditor did not say, Come, my good fellow, I will take 50 percent off the account if you find the remainder. As they had nothing with which to pay, they would not have been a bit the better if he had reduced them 90 percent! If he had reduced the debts by half, the one would have owed 250 and the other 25, but their cases would have been hopeless, since they had not a farthing of their own.

Now the Lord, when He blots out His peoples sin, leaves no trace of it remaining. My own persuasion is that when our Lord Jesus died upon the Cross, He made an end of all the sins of all His people and made full and effectual atonement for the whole of those who shall believe in Him. I can sing with all my heart

*Heres pardon for transgressions past,   
It matters not how black their cast!   
And, O my Soul, with wonder, view,   
For sins to come, heres pardon, too!*

All the sin of Believers has been, once and for all, carried into the wilderness of oblivion by our great Scapegoat and none shall ever find a sin with which to condemn one soul of the chosen band. There is no debt left against a Believerno, not one single pennyworth of debt remains upon the score! Does not the Spirit of God Himself ask the question, Who shall lay anything to the charge of Gods elect? The Lord has frankly forgiven their debt and He has not done so in part, but as a whole.

As for our sins, the depths have covered them. There is not one of them left. Hallelujah! Observe that it was a very effectual forgiveness, too. The only person that can forgive a debt is he to whom the debt is due. Only God can forgive sin, seeing it is a debt to Him. What think you of those who are said to be able to forgive you for a shilling? Why, I say that to pay them their fee would be eleven-penny, three farthings and another farthing thrown away! When you have got their forgiveness what is the good of it? Suppose I were to forgive you for injuries done by you to the Queenof what value would my forgiveness be? He against whom I have transgressed is the only one that can pronounce my pardon! And if he absolves me, how effectual is the sentence!

When the creditor said, I freely forgive you both, why, the deed was done! His lips had power! He had finished the debt by his word. And so when the Lord Jesus Christ is looked unto by the eye of faith, there comes a voice from His dear wounds which cries to the poor trembling bankrupt sinner, Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven. I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities. What an effectual pardon it is! How it charms the heart and lulls every fear to rest! He frankly, He fully, He freely, He effectually forgives! And I believe that when this is done, I may add another adjectiveit is an eternal discharge!

That creditor could never summon those debtors again for debts which he had remitted. He could never think of such a thing with any show of justice. He had frankly forgiven them and they were forgiven. God does not play fast and loose with His creaturesforgive them and then punish them. I never shall believe in Gods loving a man, today, and casting Him away tomorrow! The gifts and calling of God are without repentance on His part. Justification is not an act which can be reversed and followed with damnation. No! No! Whom He justified, them He also glorified.

*If sin is pardoned Im secure,   
Death has no sting beside   
The Law gave sin its damning power,   
But Christ, my Ransom, died.*

By His death, our Redeemer effectually swept away sin once and for all, and He removed all the curse of the Law. In the offering of bullocks and lambs there was a continual remembrance made of sin, for the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin. But the Apostle writes, This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down by the right hand of God, because His work was effectually and eternally done.

Only one more remark on this pointthis frank forgiveness applied to both the debtorsHe frankly forgave them both. The man that owed only 50 pence needed a free discharge as truly as the debtor who owed 500, for though he was not so deep in the mire, yet he was as truly in the slough. If a man was lying in prison for debt, as men used to do under our old laws, if he only owed 50 pounds, he was shut within walls just as closely as the greater debtor who owed 50,000and he could no more get out without the payment or forgiveness of his smaller liability than the bigger debtor could. A bird held by a string is as much a prisoner as a bull that is tied by a rope!

Now, you good people who have always tried to do your duty and are numbered with the 50-pence debtors, you must confess that you have become somewhat indebted to God by committing a measure of sins. Take note that you cannot be saved except by the free forgiveness of God through the precious blood of Christ. The 50-pence debtor must obtain his discharge by Grace alone. It is also a most blessed thing to perceive that he forgave the 500-pence debtor with equal freeness. Perhaps I have some here, men and women, who have never made any pretense of being goodwho from their childhood have gone from bad to worse. There is a possibility of free and instantaneous forgiveness for you at this moment. You that are over head and ears in debt to God can be freely forgiven by the same Lord who forgives the smaller debtors!

When a man has his pen in his hand and is writing receipts, it takes him no more trouble to write a receipt for 500 pounds than it does for a bill of 50the same signature will suffice! And when the Lord has the pen of His Spirit in His hand and He is about to write upon a conscience the peace which comes of reconciliation, He can write upon one as well as upon another. You with a little bill, bring it here, that infinite Grace may write upon it, CANCELLED! You with a more weighty account, come and place it near that gracious right hand, for though your bill is long and heavy, the hand of Infinite Love can write, CANCELLED, in a moment! My joy overflows at having such a Gospel to preach to you whatever your guilt, my gracious God is ready to forgive you for Jesus sake, because He delights in mercy!

III. I now beg your very special attention to the last point which is THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THIS BANKRUPTCY AND THIS FREE DISCHARGE. It is said, When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. There is a time when pardon comes and that time is when self-sufficiency goes! If any person in this place has, in his own conscience, come to this pointthat he feels he has nothing to payhe has come to the point at which God is ready to forgive him! He that will acknowledge his debt and confess his own incapacity to meet it, shall find that God frankly blots it out! The Lord will never forgive us until we are brought to the starvation of pride and the death of boasting. A sense of spiritual bankruptcy shows that a man has become thoughtfuland this is essential to salvation.

How can we believe a thoughtless person to be a saved man? If we so think about our state as to mourn our sin and feel its wickednessand if we have made a close search into our hearts and lives and find that we have no merit and no mightthen we are prepared in all thoughtfulness to say, In the Lord I have righteousness and strength. Must there not be serious thought before we can hope for mercy? Would you have God save us while we are asleep, while we are giddy, frivolous, trifling and without concern about our sin? Surely that would be giving a premium to folly! God acts not so. He will have us know the seriousness of our danger, otherwise we would treat the whole matter with lightness and miss the moral effect of pardonand He would be robbed of His Glory.

Next, when we come to feel our bankruptcy, we then make an honest confession. And to that confession a promise is givenHe that confesses his sin shall find mercy. The two debtors had acknowledged their debts and they had also openly confessed, though it must have gone against the grain a bit, that they could not pay. They humbled themselves before their creditor and then he said, I frankly forgive you. If one of these debtors had bounced and bragged, Oh, we can pay, in all probability he would have been sent to prison. As for you, poor Trembler, I do not know where you are this morning, but here is comfort for youwhen you go to God in your chamber and cry, Lord, have mercy upon me, for I am guilty, and I cannot justify myself before You, nor offer any excuse to Youthen it is that He will say, Be of good cheer! I have put away your sin; you shall not die.

When you have nothing to pay and confess your insolvency, the debt shall be wiped out. When you are brought to your worst, you shall see the Lord at His best! It is in their utter destitution that men value a discharge. If God were to give His mercy to every man at once, without his ever having had any sense of sin at all, why, men would count it cheap and think nothing of it! God is merciful, is a common saying everywhere. And it is such a bit of valueless talk with them that they let it roll glibly out as if it were no matter. They do not worship Him for His mercy or serve Him for His Grace. They say, Oh, God is merciful, and then they go on to sin worse than ever! The idea has no effect upon their hearts or lives. They have no esteem for that mercy of which they speak so freely. So the Lord takes care that the sinner shall know his need of mercy by feeling the pinch of conscience and the terror of the Law.

If I may so speak, He dispatches the sheriff and makes the soul suffer stress by convincing the man of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. The Lord puts the thought of execution into the heart and then it is, when the poor creature cries, I have nothing to pay with, that free discharge is given by the Lord and heartily prized by him to whom it comes! When our account is long and heavy, it is a blessed thing to see the Lord write, Cancelled, and to behold the whole mountain of debt swallowed up in the sea of love! Christ is precious when sin is bitter. Is it not wise on Gods part that the canceling of the debt shall come just when we have nothing to pay and, therefore, are prepared to prize a free forgiveness? Under conviction, a poor soul sees the reality of sin and of pardon!

My dear Hearer, you will never believe in the reality of forgiveness till you have felt the reality of sin! I remember when I felt the burden of sin and though, but a child, my heart failed me for anguish and I was brought very low. Sin was no bugbear to scare meit was a grim realityas a lion, it tore me in pieces. And now, today, I know the reality of pardonit is no fancy, no dreamfor my inmost soul feels its power! I know that my sins are forgiven and I rejoice because of that belief, but I should never have known the real truth of this happy condition if I had not felt the oppressive load of sin upon the conscience. I could not afford to

play at conversion, for sin was an awful fact in my soul. Our heavenly Father does not wish us to use lightness in a matter concerning which Jesus shed His bloodand so He brings us into trouble of souland afterwards into a vivid realization of Free Grace.

He lets the whip fall on our shoulders until we bleedand this makes us weary of the slavery of sin. He sets Conscience and the Law upon us and these two thrust us into the inner dungeon and make our feet fast in the stocks. All this prepares us for the delivering power which shakes the prison walls and loosens our bondsand for the tender love which washes our stripes and sets meat before us! I believe that the Lord will give us our freedom when we have got to our last farthing and not till then, because only then do we look to the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, my dear Friends, as long as we have anything else to look to, we will never look to Christ! That blessed port into which no ship did ever run in a storm without finding a sure haven is shunned by all your gallant vesselsthey would rather put into any port along the coast of self-deceit than make for the harbor which is marked out by the two lighthouses of Free Grace and dying love!

As long as a man can scrape the meal barrel and find a little in it; as long as he can hold up the oil cruse and it drips, if it only yields a drop in a week, he will never come to Christ for heavenly provision! As long as he has one rusty counterfeit farthing hidden away in the corner of his till, the sinner will never accept the riches of redeeming love! But when it is all up over himwhen he has nothing in the parlor, nothing in the kitchen, nothing in the cellarwhen there is neither stick nor stock left, then he prizes Jesus and His salvation! We break to make! We are emptied to be filled! When we cannot give, God can forgive! If any of you have any goodness of your own, you will perish forever! If you have anything you can trust to of your own, you will be lost as sure as you are living men and women!

But if you are reduced to sore extremity and Gods fierce wrath seems to burn against youthen, not only may you have mercy, but mercy is yours already!

*Tis perfect poverty alone   
That sets the soul at large.   
While we can call one mite our own   
We get no full discharge.*

*But let our debts be what they may,   
However great or small,   
As soon as we have naught to pay   
Our Lord forgives us all.*

Blessed are you poor, for you shall be rich! Blessed are you hungry, for you shall be fed! Blessed are you that are empty, for you shall be filled! But woe unto you that are rich and are increased in goods, and have need of nothing, and boast of your own goodness! Christ has nothing to do with you and we have nothing to preach to you except thisThey that are whole need not a physician. The heavenly Surgeon did not come to save those who have no need of saving. Let those who are sick prick up their ears and hear with delight, for the Physician is come with a special eye to them. Are you a sinner? Then Christ is the Savior of sinners! Join hands with Him by faith and the work is doneyou are saved forever! God bless you, for Christs sake. Amen.

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

**Tell Me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, You have rightly judged.   
Luke 7:42, 43.**

I REMEMBER seeing, somewhere or other, as a sign upon an inn, the words, The First and Last. I do not know what that may happen to be among men, but I know that love is Gods first and last. It is there that He begins with us in mercyWe love Him, because He first loved us. His love at the first springs up like a fountain in the midst of a desert and freely flows along the wilderness to the unworthy sons of men. In the end, the result of that love is that men love Himthey cannot help it any more than the rock can prevent the echo when the voice falls upon it. Love is not a creature of lawit comes not on demandit must be free or not at all.

It has its reasons why it springs up in our hearts, but it is not a mercenary thing which can be procured at such-and-such a price. It is not a matter of argumentit is not of itself an act performed as a matter of duty. Love is a duty, certainly, but it does not come to us that wayit comes to us like a roe or a young hart, over every mountain and hill, leaping and bounding. It comes not as a heavy burden dragged along an iron way. If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be despised. Men do not make themselves love by a course of calculationthey are overtaken with it and carried away by its power.

When godly men consider and enjoy the great love of God to them, they begin to love God in return, just as the bud, when it feels the sunshine, opens to it of its own accord. Love to God is a sort of natural consequence which follows from a sight and sense of the love of God to us. I think it is Aristotle who said that it is impossible for a person to know that he is loved without feeling some degree of love in return. I do not know how that may be for I am no philosopher, but I am sure that it is so with those who taste the love of God. As love is the first blessing coming from God to us, so it is the last return from us to GodHe comes to us lovingwe go home to Him loving.

I. I intend to keep to my text and handle it red hot, by first noticing that IT IS TAKEN FOR GRANTED THAT PARDONED SINNERS WILL LOVE. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? It is implied that the two debtors who had been frankly forgiven would both love their benefactor. The question was not, Which of them will love him? but,

Which of them will love him most? So, then, I say, it is taken for granted in the text that those who are pardoned will love him who has so freely pardoned them. And this, first, because it seems most natural that where kindness is received gratitude should be felt.

This is so generally admitted that gratitude is found among the lowest and worst of mankind. If you love them who love you, what thanks have you? For sinners also love those that love them. It is man-like to return good for good and ingratitude is looked upon most rightly as one of the basest of the vices. Why we find gratitude not only in men and women intelligent creaturesbut we find it in the very beasts of the field! The ox knows his owner and the ass his masters crib.

A dog that has received benefits from you will be attached to you and by every possible means will endeavor to show his affection! The ancients had many rare stories of the gratitude of wild beasts. You remember that of Androcles and the lion. The man was condemned to be torn to pieces by beasts, but a lion, to which he was cast, instead of devouring him, licked his feet because at some former time Androcles had extracted a thorn from the grateful creatures foot. We have heard of an eagle that so loved a boy with whom he had played that, when the child was sick, the eagle sickened, too. And when the child slept, this wild, strange bird of the air would sleep, but only then. And when the child awoke, the eagle awoke. When the child died, the bird died, too.

You remember that there is a picture in which Napoleon is represented as riding over the battlefield and he stops his horse, as he sees a slain man with his favorite dog lying upon his bosom doing what he can to defend his poor dead master. Even the great man-slayer paused at such a sight! There is gratitude among the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. And surely, if we receive favors from God and do not feel love to Him in return, we are worse than brute beasts! And so the Lord, in that pathetic verse in Isaiah, pleads against us, The ox knows his owner and the ass his masters crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider. If we receive favors from God, it is but natural that we should love Him in return. Alas, that many should be so unnatural, so false to every noble instinct, so dead to the gratitude which goodness deserves!

Gratitude should surely arise when the benefit is surpassingly great . Surely love must spring up with the greatest force and freedom when favors are far above the common run of blessingswhen these favors are not such as are confined to time and to the body, but when they reach to eternity and bless the soul. When favors are of such weight as the forgiveness of sin and the salvation of the soul from wrath to come I would stand and sing to the fountain of the heart as Israel did in the wilderness, Spring up, O well; sing you unto it: The princes dug the well.

And has not our great Prince who has been struck upon the cheek dug this well by giving us, through His free Grace and dying love, to taste of full remission and of complete pardon of our guilt? Shall we not, must we not love the Redeemer in return? I call common ingratitude worse than brutishbut to have sin forgiven and not to love Godin this case where shall I go for a word? I must call it devilish. It were worse than infernal to receive a deliverance from guilt so great, from punishment so justly terrible and not to love the Lord, through whom it is given to us! Oh, love the Lord, whose mercy endures forever! If, indeed, you have tasted of that mercy, you must love Him. It cannot be otherwiseyou are bound to God by bonds of love and these draw you, by a secret but irresistible force, to love the Lord in return!

And moreover, not only is this natural and necessary, because of the greatness of the mercy, but the Grace of God always takes care that wherever pardon is given love shall be ensuredfor the Holy Spirit co-operates with the work of Christ. And if we are cleansed from the stain of our former evil through the blood of Christ, we are renewed and changed in the spirit of our minds by the Holy Spirit. He does not take away our sin and then leave us that old heart of stone, insensible, ungratefulbut as He gives us a garment of righteousness He gives us a heart of flesh. The Spirit works in us a degree of love at the same time that He creates the first look of faith.

And soon our faith increases and then He works in us more and more of that love to Christ by which we cling to Him. This love works in us a hatred of sin and a spirit of obedience whereby we yield ourselves up to the service of Him who has bought us with His precious blood. You know that it is so, Brothers and Sisters. Where pardon comes, delight in God comes with it. You know that God does not divide His gifts and give justification to one and sanctification to anotherthe Covenant is oneand the blessings of the Covenant are threaded on the one string of infinite wisdom, so that when there comes the washing in the blood, there comes also a cleansing with water by the Word.

The Holy Spirit washes us from the power of sin as the blood of Christ cleanses us from the guilt of sin. Where sin is forgiven, there must be love to the God who forgave it because the Spirit of God makes sure work upon the heart of the Believerand one of his first works is love. I need not argue this further because all Christians know this as a matter of fact where there is no love there is no pardon. You cannot be pardoned and not love God as a result of His loving forgiveness! What was the very first emotion that you and I felt when we had a sense of guilt removed? We felt joy for our own sake, but immediately after, or at the same instant, we felt such intense gratitude to God that we loved Him beyond all expression!

We have sometimes been half afraid that we do not love God as much, now, as we did at that moment, though I trust that the fear is groundless. But at that moment there was nothing too hot or too heavy for us to have attempted on behalf of Him who had taken the burden from off our shoulders. We would have said at that moment, Here am I, send me, if it had been to prison, or to death! Oh, the joy of those first days! They are rightly called the days of our espousals. And what love we had then! We were willing to leave all for Christs sake. We snapped fond connections at His command. Truly, like Israel of old, we would have gone after our God into

the wildernessyes, after our Savior into the grave!   
Nothing could have kept us back or have caused us to wander from   
Him, then. Do you not remember how you used to long for Sundays to  
hear of Jesus and praise His name with His people? If there was a weeknight service, you were always there, though no one persuaded you to go.  
Then, any corner in the Meeting House was good enough for you. Now,  
perhaps, you need a very soft cushion to sit upon. You sat, then, in a   
straight-backed pew and did not know it!   
Now, you need very tender dealing and the preacher must mind that he   
interests you by illustrations and poetical allusions. But then the Gospel,  
itself, interested you! And however dull the preacher might have been, you   
were so willing to hear about Jesus and to know of His love, that there   
you wereeager to hear the most humble evangelist! Wisdom did not need  
to press you into her house, for you were earnestly waiting at the posts of  
her doors, glad to hear even the footsteps of those who came in and out.  
Oh, those were brave days! I hope that we have braver days now. But, for   
certain, as sure as we knew our pardon, we felt that we loved the Lord   
with all our hearts.   
Now I want to make a little practical use of this inference from the text.  
That pardoned souls love their pardoning God is a great Truth and a very  
solemn one in its bearings upon us at this time, for there are persons in  
this house of prayer who were never forgivenand we are sure of that unhappy fact since they do not love God. Their sins must be still upon them   
because they have not the token of pardon, inasmuch as they have no  
love to Jesus Christ our Lord. Oh, listen to me, you that do not love God   
and yet, perhaps, dream that you are saved! Are there not some here that  
seldom think of Godwho do not care if a day, a week, a month, a year  
should pass over their headsand yet they have no thought of the Almighty Judge of all the earth?   
They receive His mercies but they do not thank Him! They feel His   
power but they do not fear Him! God is not in all their thoughts. O my   
Hearer, if this is your case, you do not love Himfor if we love any person   
we are sure to think of him! Thoughts fly that way in which the heart   
moves. I do not say that we are always thinking of those we lovebut I do  
say that our thoughts will fly that way when they can. You know at sunset  
where the crows live. Perhaps all day long you are unable to tell for they   
may fly from one plowed field to another to find their meat. But watch   
when night comes on and when they are free from other obligations and   
wish to find restthey fly straight to those tall trees where they have built   
their nests.   
A man may, in the busy time of the day, think about 50 thingsbut let   
him be free from pressing labor and careand he returns to his love as   
birds fly to their nests at night! His thought flies to Jesus because Jesus   
is the home of his heart. If your hearts love God your thoughts will run to   
Him as the rivers run to the sea. Yes, and often in the very middle of  
business the man who loves his God will be speaking with Him! He may not interrupt the conversation and those in the shop may not know what is on his mind, but his heart will be up above the mountains where the angels dwell, communing with the great Father of lights! But where there   
is no thought of God, there is no love to Him.   
Are there not many who never do anything for God? He has made them   
and He preserves them, and yet they never make Him any return by way   
of willing action designed to give Him pleasure. I may put it to some of  
youdid you ever do anything distinctly for God in all your lives? What?   
Not so much as once? Ah, me, a man so curiously made by the Divine fingerdisplaying infinite skill in every blood vessel, nerve and muscle that  
is necessary for his life and motionand yet he has never thought of the   
Great One who has set all this machinery in motion and keeps it in action! To live only by God and yet to live without Him! Strange! Can there exist a man who never does anything for his God who is constantly doing so much for him? If so, I would say to such a oneYou   
have never been pardoned for you do not love God since you never think   
of Him and do nothing for Him. Some men evidently do not love God for  
they have no care about anything that concerns Him. They do not refrain   
from sin because sin would grieve God. The idea of grieving God, perhaps,  
has not crossed their mindsso they vex the Holy Spirit most thoughtlessly. But, ah, if you love anyone, you will not likely cause him griefyou   
will not do the evil thing which he hates.   
He that loves God will often have a check put upon him and feel that he   
cannot do this great wickedness and sin against God. To sin against God  
is the greatest of sin and the essence of sin. The venom of sin lies there.  
This makes sin so exceedingly sinful that it is against the God of Love. But  
if you never felt that, then you do not love Him and, for certain, you are   
not forgiven. Look at othersthey do not love God, for they do not care for   
His house where His people meet. They seldom come to the meeting for  
worship, and if they come it is from some other motive than to meet with  
God. They do not care for His day. Sundays are very dreary in London, so   
they say. There is nothing to interest them for they have no interest in the   
great Father, or His Incarnate Sonthey have no desire to hear of Him or  
to praise Him, or to pray to Him.   
They do not care for His Bible though it is a world of delights and comforts. The Bible is perfumed with the love of God but they perceive not its   
fragrance. The Saviors face is to be seen reflected in almost every page  
and yet some think that the Bible is more dull than an old almanac and   
though they must keep it in their housefor it is respectable to have a   
copy of ityet to read it and to read it with pleasurewhy, that has never  
happened to them! Nor is there any likelihood that it ever will unless they  
get made anew. Nor do they care for Gods people. In fact, they like a quiet  
joke against Christian people and sometimes, if they can see faults in   
themand, oh, how readily they may!they report those faults with considerable exaggerations and feel pleased to eat up the faults of Gods people as they eat bread!   
Lack of love to the children argues lack of love to their Father. He that loves Him that begat, loves him also that is begotten of Him. We know that we love God when we love His children. But if in your heart there is no such love to His children, to His Book, to His day, to His house, or to His service, you may rest quite certain, my Friend, that your guilt still clings to you. You are not pardoned and God will require that which is past and call you to account. For every secret thing He will bring you into judgment and for every idle word that you have spoken He will take reck  
oning of you.   
Ah, how sad it is that when I am longing to speak joyously about the   
love that arises out of pardoned sin, I am compelled, for pitys sake, to   
turn aside to give a warning to many who, having no love to God, prove by  
that fact that they have never been forgiven! So I leave the first point. It is   
supposed in the text and taken for granted that all pardoned sinners will   
love Him who has pardoned them.  
II. But now, secondly, IT IS SUGGESTED IN THE TEXT THAT THERE   
ARE DIFFERENCES IN THE DEGREES OF LOVE TO GOD. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most. These words evidently show that   
some persons love God more than others and that, albeit there must be a   
sincere love to God in all pardoned sinners, yet there is not the same degree of love. Love is evidently a Divine Grace which is not stereotyped and   
cast in a mold so as to be the same in every case and at every time. Love is a thing of lifeit is, therefore, a thing of growth. It is certainly so   
in our own selves. There was a time when we did not love God so much as

we do now. And I grieve to say that there are even now times when we do   
not love God so much as we once did, for we grow cold and backsliding.  
Love is not like a piece of cast iron, fixed and set. It grows and has its   
times of budding, flowering and leaf-shedding. It is like a fireat one time   
it may burn low and at another time it may be blown up to a very vehement heat. Love rises and fallsI speak not of Gods love to usbut of our  
love to God. It has its ups and downs, its summers and its winters, its   
flood tides and its ebbs. And if we find a change in love in the same heart,   
we are not at all astonished that it should differ in different hearts! Besides, we know that there are differences in love because there are   
differences in all the other Divine Graces. Faithsome men have much  
faith. God be thanked that there are men of strong faith still on the face of  
the earth! But there are others who have a faith which, though a true   
faith, is a very weak one. It is a trembling faith. It cannot walk the waves   
with Peter, but it can sink with him and it can cry out for deliverance.  
Faith, in some Christians, seems to be a very feeble affair. As I said the   
other day, they hardly know whether it is faith or unbelief. Their cry is,   
Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief, as if they had made a mistake in calling it faith at all for it was so mixed with unbelief.   
It is not always such an infant Grace, for there are strong Believers who   
have turned to fight the armies of the aliensmen who have borne their   
cross without impatience and their testimony without cowardicemen  
who have conquered sin and lived in holiness and brought glory to God. Faith, like a ladder, has its lower and its higher rounds. Faith has its dawning, its noon, its shade. We are sure that it is so, for we have observed it in ourselves and seen it in others. We have seen it great and we have seen it little. The practical point I would reach is just this. Let us look, first of all, to our love in its sincerity. What if my love may not be compared with yours as to degree? Yet the Lord grant that I may truly love   
Him.   
Peter could not say that he loved Christ more than others, but he did   
say, You know all things; You know that I love You. A little pearl is a   
pearl as much as a great one, though every one of us would sooner have  
the greater pearl. There is the Queens image on a four-penny piece as   
certainly as there is upon the sovereignthough we would all prefer the   
golden coin! There is the image of God on all His peoples faith and love,  
whether great or little. The main thing with the coin is to be sure that it is   
genuine metal. So, if love is real love, that is the main point. Do you love   
the Lord with all your heart? If so, strive to have more love but do not fling  
away what you have, for you would thus despise what the Spirit of God   
has worked in you.   
Endeavor also, dear Friends, to have growing love. Do not be satisfied to   
be today what you were 12 months ago. I am afraid that some Christians  
do not grow much. I am very glad when I see them grow downward when  
they are rooted in humility, when they have truer views of themselves   
than they ever had and a deeper sense of their indebtedness to God. That  
is good growth. Try to have, however, a love that grows so that you may  
more forcibly love Jesus Christ than you did in days that are past. Say to   
yourself, Well, if I have ever so little love, it shall be practical love, I will   
show it. I will be doing something for my Lord.   
The woman, by whose means this parable was called forth, loved Christ   
so that she brought her alabaster box of ointment and anointed His feet   
and washed them with tearsand wiped them with the hair of her head.   
And one of the best ways to make love grow is to use all the love you have.  
Is it not so with merchants and their money? If they want to increase their  
capital, they trade with it. If you want to increase your love to Jesus, use   
it! Do not merely talk about it but actually serve Him under its sweet constraint. It is a very poor Christianity that consists in sitting still and   
dreaming and never attempting any practical service for Jesus, our Lord. He that thinks that he will quietly enjoy religion all alone will soon find   
that he has very little of it to enjoyfor doubts and fears will breed in   
swarms in a stagnant atmosphere. Where there is none of the blessed   
wind of activity, there will soon be mists and dampperhaps foul gas and   
fevers. And if you have but little love at present, cry to God to give you a   
more intense love and, though I have said that to use your love is a good  
way to increase it, yet there is something still better, and that is to know  
more and feel more of the love of Christ to you. If you exercise, you will increase your sense of warmthbut it will be a far surer thing if you get  
where the sun shines with equatorial heatso other means are good but to get near to Jesus is best of all. In proportion as you live close to the  
glorious central sun of the love of Christ, you will, yourself, be warm. I was about to compare the heart of my Lord to a volcanic mountain   
constantly streaming with the burning lava of love. Oh, that my soul could   
but get that fire-stream poured into it to set the whole of my nature on fire   
and consume me in the flame-torrent of love! You see that it is suggested   
in the text that there are differences in the degrees of love and there let us  
leave it, for we must come to the third point.   
III. Thirdly, THE TEXT PUTS TO US A QUESTION, WHO WILL LOVE   
HIM MOST? I want to introduce the question to you by saying that it is a   
very interesting one. After what the Lord has done for us, one takes pleasure in thinking what will come of it. One likes to think of the farmers harvest. After all that plowing and sowing, what will come of it? It is interesting to begin to calculate the crop and to anticipate the shouts of harvest  
home.   
Now, what will come of infinite lovethe supreme act of Gods heart to   
men? What will come out of the gift of His Only-Begotten Son and the putting away of sin through the death of Jesus? What will men do for God after this? How much will they love Him? It is an interesting question. What   
have you to say upon it? And it is a personal question which the Lord puts   
to each one of us. You know He put it to Simon. Tell Me, He said, which  
of them will love him most? And He puts it to us to consider it, to turn it  
over and to give our own verdict because there may be some blunder in  
our heart which this question is meant to set rightand the thoughts   
which the enquiry will cause in the spirit are meant to correct our judgments.   
Therefore do not put it aside, but try now to answer it as the Lord puts   
it. It is a practical questionWhich of them will love him most?for everything in conduct depends upon love. Where there is much love, there is   
sure to be much service in proportion to the strength. Give us a Church   
that loves Christ Jesus muchyou will have mighty Prayer Meetings! You   
will have a holy membership! You will have liberal giving to the cause of   
Christ! You will have hearty praising of His name! You will have careful   
walking before the world! You will have earnest endeavors for the conversion of sinners! Missions at home and abroad will be set on foot when love  
is fervent.   
When the heart is right, everything is likely to be right. But when the   
heart goes wrong, oh, what a fatal thing it is! A disease of the heart is   
looked upon as the worst of mischiefs that can happen to a man. One old   
doctor of my acquaintance used to say, We can do nothing with the   
heart. God keep us from a diseased hearta fatty degeneration of the   
heart, or an ossification of the heart towards the Lord Jesus Christ! The   
question asked in the text is, however, a somewhat limited one. It is this.   
The question is not, Who in all the world will love Christ most?but  
who out of two persons, in whom there is no particular difference of character, but only this one differencethat the one owes 500 pence and the   
other 50which out of these two will love Christ more?   
We will suppose that they are equally tender of heart and equally regenerate and that they do know, each of them, certainly, that his debt has been discharged. The only difference between them is that one has been a grosser sinner than the other. And the question asked is, Which of those two will love the Savior most? It is a very simple question, too, not at all hard to answerfor even this Simon, the Pharisee, who, like the rest of the Pharisees, was very badly instructed, yet, nevertheless, could see his way to answer the question correctly. So he answered, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And the Lord replied, You have rightly   
judged. Thus I have set before you the question.   
IV. And so, lastly, IT IS EXPECTED THAT WE GIVE A REPLY. And I   
wish for myselfand therefore wish the same for youthat each one of us   
may say, I am the man that ought to love the Lord Jesus most and, by  
His Grace, I will surely do so. The most indebted should love most. Have   
we not here many 500-pence debtors? Some of my dear Brethren, here   
present, were, among outward sinners, the very chiefmen who could   
drink and swear and lieringleaders in everything that was evil. Blessed be God that such have been here led to Jesus! We heard the   
other night a dear Brother tell us of what he used to be. With modesty   
and shamefacedness he mentioned how great his sin had beenbut his   
sin was put awayhe was pardoned and he knew it! And he rejoiced in it.   
Such a man must say, I will love Him most. Where there has been overt   
sin, palpable, undeniablewhere the outward character has been defiled   
and stained with itforgiveness involves us in deep obligation to grateful  
love. You may stand in the front rank and love Jesus most.   
But I am not going to let you rise to that eminence of obligation, or   
rather sink to that depth of indebtedness without having a struggle for it   
myself. Some of us take that place of eminent obligation on

another  
ground and yet it is the same groundfor while some of us were never   
openly profane, or drunken, or immoralwe have to confess the equal  
greatness of our sin on account of our offending against light and knowledge.   
We sinned greatly against early convictions, against a holy training,   
against a tender conscience, against singular favors received from God  
and therefore with shame we begin to take the lowest place  
acknowledging that to us belongs the greatest debt of grateful praise to  
God. When I was preaching once, I saidand I meant itthat I should be  
the deepest debtor to Divine Grace that ever entered the gates of Glory  
and I ventured to say   
*Then loudest of the crowd Ill sing,   
While Heavens resounding mansions ring, With shouts of Sovereign Grace.*   
It was in a country place and as I came down the pulpit stairs many  
clustered about me to shake hands. And one old lady said to me, You  
made one great blunder in your sermon. I said, My dear Soul, I dare say  
I made a dozen. I am a great blunderer. No, she said, but you said that   
you would sing the loudest when you get to Heavenbut you shall not, for I owe more to Divine Grace than you possibly can. I was once a great sinner and I have had much forgiven. And therefore I shall praise God more than you. I did not yield the point, but I held my tongue. I could let her be first and yet take the same place myself! As I went down the aisle many friends declared that they would not give way to me in that point   
and that they ought to praise God more than I, for they owed Him more. It was a happy controversy! It reminded me of Ralph Erskines, Contention among the Birds of Paradise, where he represents the saints in Glory,   
each saying that he shall lie the lowest and shall praise the most sweetly   
the infinite love of God. I think that there are grounds upon which some   
here, who have been kept from everything which is outwardly evil, may,  
nevertheless, feel that inwardly they are 500-pence debtorsand so, when  
the question is asked, Which will love Him most? they will say, Why, I! I  
was not so honest as some of those wicked fellows. I did not dare to say   
all they said, nor to be openly vile as they werebut I was quite as bad at  
heart and if I dare have had my full swingI should have been as base as   
they were.   
But I do not think that the spirit of the parable is exhausted by either  
of these cases. I think it includes more. There are some who evidently  
have not had more forgiven than others as to outward sin. On the contrary, they have been prudently brought up from their childhood and yet  
for many a year they have been foremost in service and have been special  
lovers of the Lord. Though by no means great offenders in their unconverted state, they are certainly great saints nowthey are intense in their   
service, consistent in their character, fervent in their love. How is it that   
some who shout that they have been snatched from the burning and according to their own statement were the very chief of sinnersand make a   
great trumpet-blowing over their own conversionyet do not love the Lord  
Jesus one half so much as these dear, quiet souls who never went into   
open sin?   
I take it the reason is this. Our estimate of sin is, after all, the thing   
which will create and inflame our love. If a man thinks sin to be exceedingly sinful and feels it to be so, he has a deeper sense of his indebtedness   
than the man who may have committed grosser vices but has never seen  
them in their real blacknessas they appear in the light of Gods Countenance. Too many Believers know little of what it is to be amazed and astounded at the heinousness of their transgressions. Why, time was with  
meand is nowwhen, if I had inadvertently spoken a word that was not   
exactly true, it cost me more pain to think of what was only a hasty error  
than it has cost many men to repent of their cursing and swearing! I am sorry to say it, but I believe that some make a glory of their shame   
and dare to brag of what they used to be. They stand up and make confession without a tear in their eye, or a blush on their cheek. Such testimony ought never to be heard for it is a positive creator of evil in the   
minds of those that hear it! I am sorry to have to say it but I know that it   
is so. Testimonies are published which are inducements to vice and tend  
to make men immoral, rather than to make them turn to God! In certain circles he is treated as a hero who can prove that he has been a great rascal. It was not thus that the prodigal was received by his fatherhe   
never hung up his old rags as a trophy!   
O Brothers and Sisters, when we talk about what we were, we had better veil our faces! Our former follies are things to be confessed to God in  
secretand if they must be spoken in public, to the praise of Divine   
Gracethere must be a careful avoidance of anything like boasting, for it   
is a shame even to speak of the things that were done of them in secret.   
When there is really a deep sense of sin, there is a holy, delicate way of   
speaking of it. Old sins are not to be talked of as an old soldier shoulders   
his crutch and shows how fields were won. A crimson blush is the best   
color to wear when we speak of our lost estate. To talk smilingly of injuries   
done to the delicacy of our own conscienceof awful injuries done to others by foul exampleis not to glorify God but to enthrone vice! And, dear Friends, I believe that some whom God has preserved by preventing Grace from going into great sin, will, nevertheless, love Him most  
because they have a clearer view than others of what it cost in order that  
they might be pardoned. Happy are they who remember well the griefs of   
our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane   
*Theres never a gift His hand bestows   
But cost His heart a groan.*   
Oh, if your heart dwells on Calvary, where falls the crimson shower of  
Christs most precious bloodif you gaze intently upon the wounds of Jesus till you die into the death of the Crucifiedthen do you love Him   
much! It is well to have the soul torn with anguish because *It cost HIM cries and tears   
To bring us near to God:   
Great was our debt,   
And He appears   
To make the payment good.*   
Remember, in proportion as you estimate the Sacrifice, you will love Him   
who was the Sacrifice for sin. Brothers and Sisters, I hope you all love  
Christ Jesus more than I do, for I would have Him possess the highest  
love of every human heartand yet I will not be willingly excelled by any  
one of you in a competition of love to Jesus. I will run my very best that   
no man take my crown   
But supposing, dear Friends, any of you do love Him mostthen show  
it just as that woman did who brought the alabaster box of precious ointment. If you love Him most, do most. Do everything that is humanly possible, quickened by the Spirit of God. If you have done much, do 10 times   
more! Never talk of what you have done, but go on to something else. An   
officer rode up to his general, and said, Sir, we have taken two guns from   
the enemy. It is well, said the general, Take two more. If you have   
most love to Christ, do most spiritual good to men. Yet do something distinctly for Jesus.   
It is a blessed token for good when our work among men is not so   
much for the sake of sinners as for love of Jesus. When we love the Brethren it should be because they belong to Christ. It is sweet to serve the Lord Christ Himself. See how the holy woman offered homage distinctly to her Lordtears for His travel stainshair to wipe His feet, ointment to anoint His flesh. Do your choicest and best for Jesus, for Jesus personally. Try to do it most humbly. Stand behind Him. Do not ask anybody to look at you. Do it very quietly. Do it feeling that it is a great honor to be permitted to do the least service for Jesus. Do not dream of saying, I am somebody. I am doing great things. I do more, even, than Simon the   
Pharisee. Come see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts.   
Jehu talked in that fashionbut he was good for nothing. Do your personal part without seeking to be seen of men. Do it self-sacrificingly. Bring   
your best ointment. Pinch yourself for Christ. Make sacrificesgo without  
this and that to have something which you can do Him honor. Do it very  
penitently. When you serve Him best, still let the tears fall on His feet,  
mingling with the costly ointment. The tears and the ointment go well together. Mourn your guilt while you rejoice in His Grace. Do it continuously.   
This woman, said Christ, since I came in has not ceased to kiss My  
feet. Do not leave off loving Him and serving Him. Do it on and on and   
onhowever much the flesh may ask for respite from service. Do it enthusiastically. See how she kissed His feetnothing less than this would express her love!   
Stoop down and kiss and kiss again those blessed feet which traveled   
so far in love for you! Throw your whole soul into your deed of love. Why,   
they will say, Mrs. So-and-So is enthusiastic! She is quite carried away   
by her zeal. Let it be true more and more! Never mind what the coldhearted think, for they cannot understand you. They will say, Ah, that   
young person is too fast by half. Never mind. Be faster still! Wise people   
cry out, He has too many irons in the fire. But I say to you, heat up the   
fire! Get all the irons red hot and hammer away with all your might! With   
all your strength and energy plunge into the service of your Master! If you   
love your Master, you can best show your love by ardent service. The Lord   
bless you with the utmost degree of love, for Jesus Christs sake! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONPsalm 18.** HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK810, 814, 797.

MR. SPURGEONS return was deferred for one week by a severe attack of sciatica and gout, but he prays that he may preach at home February 2nd. Oh, for a great blessing!

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #2183 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A GRACIOUS DISMISSAL   
NO. 2183

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, JANUARY 11, 1891,**

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

**And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace. Luke 7:50.**

THE main part of my subject will bethat gracious dismissal, Go in peace. To her who had been so lately blessed, the word, Go, sounded mournfully, for she would gladly have remained through life with her pardoning Lord, but the added words, in peace, turned the wormwood into honeythere was now peace for her who had been so long hunted and harried by her sins! Rising from the feet she had washed with tears, she went forth to keep her future footsteps such as those of a believing and, therefore, saved woman ought to be.

We like a motto to begin the year with and it has been useful to some spirits to choose a motto with which to enter on a new course of life. We climb the hill of enterprise, or dare the wave of trial with an inspiring word upon our lips. To certain young men, a word has come in lifes early morning, wet with the dew of Heavenand that word of their dawn of day has stayed with them. The echoes of that life-evoking word have followed them long after it was spoken. Amid strange scenes it has come to them like a voice from the unseen. It has whispered to them within the curtains of their dying bedit has murmured consolation amid Jordans swelling waves. That first word of joy and peace from Jesus with which they began the new life came to them, again, just as they were melting away into the invisible land. And so they began the service of the Redeemerand so He declared that their work was finished. Perhaps that love-note will be their welcome at the very gates of Heaven!

Our Lord, in the instance before us, sent a penitent away from the chill atmosphere of self-righteous quibbling and thus relieved her of a controversy for which she was not fitted. But I see more than that in this benediction. It looks to me as if our Divine Master, when He found this poor sinner so full of love to Him that she washed His feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, having by a parable explained to the Pharisee the reason for the greatness of her love, then said to her, Go in peace,meaning that word not only to be cheering for the necessary purpose of the moment, but to go with her and to attend her all the rest of her life, until, when she came into the dark valley, she should fear no evil, for she would still hear that sweet voice saying, Go in peace. What music to have heard! What music still to hear!

Now, I would to God that the word which I shall speak at this time might be honored of the Lord to serve that sacred purpose to some here present. May it be a life-word to certain of you! May it be to others of us who have long known the Savior a revival of our restand may we get such a draught of peace from Jesus that we may never thirst again! The lips of our Divine Lord are a wellspring of delight! Each word is a chalice brimmed with sweetness. Imbibing this, we shall go our way, even to our journeys end, after the manner of the hymn which we sang just now

*Calm in the hour of buoyant health,   
Calm in my hour of pain;   
Calm in my poverty or wealth,   
Calm in my loss or gain.   
Calm me, my God, and keep me calm,   
Softly resting on Your breast,   
Soothe me with holy hymn and Psalm,   
And bid my spirit rest.*

Oh, that our life may be as a sea of glass! May the sacred circle of our fellowship be within the golden line of the peace of God! You who did bid us come to You and rest, now bid us, go in peace.

I am going to say a little in my opening upon a delightful assurance which constituted the reason why the woman went in peaceYour faith has saved you; or, as in the 48th verse, Your sins are forgiven you. Upon the strength of the assurance that she was saved, she might safely go in peace! When we have talked a little upon that subject, we will then come to a considerate preceptthe Savior directed her, in the moment of trial, to, go in peace. There was an assurance for her comfort and a precept for her guidance.

I. First, then, consider A DELIGHTFUL ASSURANCE. The ground upon which the penitent woman might go in peace was that she had been saved. The Savior assured herYour faith has saved you.

She was not saved by any other way than we are saved, but she received the common salvation by like precious faith. The way of salvation to her was faith in Christthat is the same way for us, but she had what some of you, no doubt, would greatly like to haveshe had an assurance that she was saved from the Lords own mouth! I think I hear some saying, I should go in peace, I am sure, if the Lord Jesus would but appear to me and speak, and say with His own lips, Your faith has saved you. It is natural that you should think so. It must have been rapture to receive a benediction from the mouth of our King, our Savior! Yet, dear Friends, we must not hang our confidence upon a mere circumstance. For a mere circumstance it is, whether Christ shall literally stand before you in the flesh and say, Your faith has saved you, or whether He shall say it to you by the Infallible record of His own Word.

It does not make much difference as to my faith in what my father says to me, whether I meet the venerable man in the morning in my garden and there hear his voice, or whether I get a letter by post in his handwriting, and he says to me upon that paper just what he would have said if I had met him face to face. I do not require him to always come up the hill to my house to tell me everything that he has to sayI should think myself an idiot if I did! If I were to say, My dear Father, you have assured me of your love by letter, but somehow, I cannot credit it unless you come and look me in the face and take my hand and assure me of your good will. Surely, he would say to me, My dear Son, what ails you? You must be out of your mind. I never knew you to be so childish before! My handwriting has always been enough. I can hardly think you mean it when you say that you cannot credit me unless I stand manifest before your eyes and with your ears you hear me speak.

Now, what I would not do to my earthly father, I certainly would not do to my heavenly Savior! I am perfectly satisfied to believe what He writes to me and if it is so written in His Book, it seems to me to be quite as true and sure as if He had actually come from Heaven and had talked with me, or had appeared to me in the visions of the night. Is not this the reasoning of commonsense? Do you not at once agree with me?

Well, you say, we go with you there, dear Sir, but, then, He spoke that word to her personally. We would never have any more doubts, but would go in peace if He said that word of assurance to us. You see, it is not merely that Jesus, Himself, spoke and said, Your faith has made you whole, but He looked that way! He turned towards her and she knew that He referred to her. There was no mistaking to whom the assurance was given! There were other people in the room, but He did not say it to Simon. He did not say it to Peter. He did not say it to James and John. She knew by the look of Him that He meant it for her and for her, alone, for she was the only person to go and, consequently, the only one to go in peace. Our Lord put it in the singular number and said, Your faith has saved you. I want it to come home just so to me.

Yes, but I think that this is a little unreasonable, is it not? Because if my father (to carry on my figure) were to speak to me, and to my brothers, and to my sisters, and were to say, Dear children, I have loving thoughts concerning you, and I have laid up in store for your needs, I do not think that I should say to him, by-and-by, Now, Father, do you know that I did not believe you, or derive any pleasure from what you said because you spoke to others beside myself? I did not think your statement of love could be true because you included my brothers and my sisters. You did not use the singular, but you put it in the pluraland you spoke to all my brothers and sisters, as well as to myselfand, therefore, I felt that I could not take any comfort out of your tender assurances. I should be a most unreasonable kind of person if I were to talk in that wayand my father would begin to think that his son was qualifying for a lunatic asylum! If he did not attribute it to unkindness of heart, he certainly would ascribe it to stupidity of head! Why, surely, surely, if my father says the same to each one of his children as he says to me, his words are all the more likely to be true, instead of being less worthy of belief and, therefore, I derive comfort from his promises of love being put in the plural rather than in the singular. Surely it should not be less easy to believe that God would deal graciously with me in company with thousands of others than that He should pursue a solitary plan with me as the lone object of His love. Is it not so?

Ah, yes! says one, but you have not hit on it yet. I want to know that I am one that is in that plural! And I want to know that I really am one of those to whom Jesus speaks in His Word. My anxious Friend, you may know itand you may know it most certainly. It is written, He that believes on Him has everlasting life. It need never be a question whether you believe in Him or not. If you trust Him, that is the gist of the matter. You can readily ascertain whether you do really trust Him, or do not trust Him. If you do trust Him, you are His, and every promise of His Covenant is made to you! You have faith, and when the Lord lays it down as a general statement that faith savesthe statement is applicable to all the world, in every place and in all timeuntil the present age shall endand men shall have passed into the fixed state of retribution where no Gospel of faith is preached. Your faith has saved you. If you have faith at allif you believe that Jesus is the Christyou are born of God! If you can say to the Lord Jesus

*All my trust on You is stayed   
All my help from You I bring,*   
that is faith and Jesus testifies, Your faith has saved you.

Now, because the Infallible Witness says this of all who have faith, I do not think you ought to doubt it. It is true you do not hear His voice because He says it rather by the written Word than by word of mouth, but surely this does not affect your faith. We believe a true man whether he writes or speaksindeed, if there is any choice, we prefer that which he has deliberately put on paper, for this remains when the sound of the voice is clean gone. It is most profitable for us that we should read our Lords declaration over and over againand put it in all sorts of shapes and see how it always remains faithful and true. It is more assuring to you to find it in the volume of the Book than it would be if the Savior met you tonight, and said to you, Your sins are forgiven you. Your faith has saved you. The record excels the voice.

No, you say, I cannot see that. Well now, Peter was with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration and nothing could shake Peters conviction that he had been there in the midst of that heavenly Gloryand yet, for all that, Peter says, concerning the Inspired Word, We have a more sure Word of testimony! He felt that even the memory of that vision, which he had assuredly seen, did not always yield to him so much assurance as did the abidingly Inspired Word of God! You ought to feel the same. If I were conscious tonight that, at some period of my life, I had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken to me, the very spot of ground on which it occurred would be exceedingly dear and sacred to my spirit. But I am certain that when I grew depressedwhen darkness rushed over my soul, as it sometimes does, I would be sure to say to myselfYou never saw anything of the kind! It was a delusion, a figment of your imagination, a delirium and nothing more.

But, Beloved, when I get to this Book and see before me the sacred lines, I know that I am not deluded! There it stands, God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. I am sure about that and I am sure that I believe and, therefore, I am sure that I am saved! I like to put my finger right down on the passage and then say, Lord, I know You cannot lie. I have never had a question about this being Your Book. Whatever other doubts have plagued me, this has not. You have so spoken it home to my soul that I am as assured that this is Your Book as I am assured of my own existence. And, therefore, You have done better for the removal of my doubts and for the assurance of my souls eternal salvation, by putting Your promise in your Book than if You had, Yourself, personally appeared to me and spoken with Your own voice.

O my Hearer, the written Word is most sure! If you believe, you are saved, as surely as you are alive. If you believe, Heaven and earth may pass away, but the Word of the Lord shall stand fast for you. He that believes in Him has everlasting life. He has eternal life in present possession! Our Lord has put it thusHe that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession of Him shall be saved. There are no, ifs, or, buts, about these Words of promise. Salvation is put as a present thing and as an abiding thing, but in every case as a certain thing! And why should we be worried and worn about the matter? It is so and let us take the comfort of the fact. We must either throw away this Book by beginning to talk about degrees of inspiration and all that foul rubbish, or else we are logically bound to be sure of our hope and to rejoice in it!

I guarantee you, O my Hearer, that as long as you stand fast by the belief that this is a sure Word of testimony, you will know that you are saved! If this Book is true, every Believer in Jesus is as safe as Jesus, Himself. To say, I believe, but I am afraid I am not saved, is to say, but in a roundabout way, that you do not believe at all! For, if you believe, then you believe that God speaks the Truthand this is the testimony God has given us eternal life, and that life is in His Son. This is the testimony of the great Father and the testimony of the eternal Spirit! And we must not dare to doubt it. You may doubt whether you believe or not, but given that you do really and unfeignedly put your trust in the Lord Jesus, then, as effect follows cause, it is certain that the cause of faith will be followed by its sure effectsalvation! Your faith has saved you; go in peace. Do not worry any longergo in peace! Have done with questioning! End all debatego in peace. Go about your business, for the work of salvation is done! You are a saved soulgo and rejoice in finished salvation and ask no more questions. Why do you cry you unto Me? said God to Moses, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward. Why do you question and doubt any longer? Go forward to enjoy what God has prepared for you! And as you are saved and justified in Christ, now seek sanctification and all the other blessings of the Covenant of Grace which lie before you in Christ Jesus your Lord! The promise is surebe sure that it is soand in perfect rest of soul enjoy the good which God provides you!

I think I have thus brought out as clearly as I can that delightful assurance which is the ground of the command, Go in peace.

II. We come, secondly, to listen to A CONSIDERATE PRECEPT. Our Lord, with wise tenderness, dismissed the beloved object of His pardoning love and bade her, Go in peace. May the Holy Spirit bless this to us!

This precept divides itself into two parts. There is, first, Go. And then there is, Go in peace.   
There is go. Now, in, go, there are two thingsto go from and to go to. Where was she to go from? First, she was to go from these quibblers. Simon and the Pharisees are as full of objections as a swarm of bees is full of stings. They say in their hearts, one to another, Who is this that also forgives sins? They have even dared to question the Character of the Perfect One and have hinted a suspicion of His purity for allowing such a woman to come so near Him and to wash His feet with her tears. Therefore the Savior says to her, Go. This was not a happy place for a childlike love to linger in. Her soul would have been among lions. Jesus seems to say, Do not stay to be tormented by these quibblers. Your faith has saved yougo. You have gained a great blessinggo home with it. Let these people argue with each other. You have a rich prizetake it out of the reach of these pirates.   
Oftentimes I believe that the child of God would find it to be his greatest wisdom, whenever he is in company that begins to assail his Lord, or to denounce his faith, just to go about his business and let the scoffers have their scoffing to themselves. Some of us have thought it our miserable duty to read certain books that have been brought out against the Truth of God, that we might be able to answer thembut it is a perilous calling. The Lord have mercy upon us when we have to go down into these sewersfor the process is not healthy!   
Oh, says a man, but you must prove all things! Yes, so I will. But if one should set a joint of meat on his table and it smelt rather high, I would cut a slice, but if I put one bit of it in my mouth and found it far gone, I would not feel it necessary to eat the whole round of beef to test its sweetness! Some people seem to think that they must read a bad book throughand they must go and hear a bad preacher often before they can be sure of his quality. Why, you can judge many teachings in five minutes! You say to yourself, No, Sir, no, no, no! This is good meatfor dogs! Let them have it, but it is not good meat for me and I do not intend to poison myself with it. The Savior does not tell the woman, Stop, now, and hear what Simon has got to say. Dear good woman, you have been washing My feet with tears and here is a highly intelligent gentleman, a Pharisee, who has a very learned speech to delivergive him a fair hearing. You have to prove all thingstherefore stay and hear him. And here are more gentlemen who object to My pardoning your sins. And their objections are fetched from deep veins of thought. Listen to them and then I will answer their questions and quiet your mind.   
No, the Savior says, Go in peace. You have peacedo not stay till you lose it. You have your comfort and joyrefuse to be robbed of them. Why, if you were in a room and you saw a certain number of gentlemen of a suspicious characterand you had your watch with youyou would not feel it necessary to stay and see whether they were able to extract your watch from you, but you would say to yourself, No, I am best out of this company. We are safest out of the society of those whose great objective it is to rob us of our faith. Your faith has saved you. Go home. Leave them. Go in peace.   
I think that He meant, besides going away from the men, Go away from the publicity into which you have unwillingly stepped. If our Savior had been like some excellent people of the present day, He would have said, Stand before all these men and tell your experience. I shall require you to be at half-a-dozen meetings this week and you must speak at every one of them. A splendid woman, was she not, who washed the Saviors feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head? She might have exhibited her eyes and her hairand told their gracious story. Who can tell but several would have been impressed by the narrative? The Savior said to the womanso excitable, for she was all that, as well as gratefulYour faith has saved you; go in peace. As much as to say, There are certain of your own sex that you can speak to. You will find some poor fallen woman to whom you can quietly tell of My pardoning Grace. But yours is a case in which the very beauty of your character will lie in the quietude of your future life. Your faith has saved you. That is enough for you. You have come upon the stage of action by that splendid act of your love, but do not acquire the habit of winning publicity. Do not aspire to display yourself in a bold and heroic attitude, but go in peace. He almost seems to say, Subside now into your family. Take your place with the rest of your sisters. Adorn, by your future purity, My doctrine, and let all men see what a change has been worked in you, for, perhaps that very weakness of yours which made you what you were as a sinner, may put you in danger, even as a saint. Therefore I do not ask you to tarry here and join My disciples, or follow Me publicly through the streets. But your faith has saved you; go in peace.

I think that the Master taught a great deal of wisdom here, which some of those who are leaders in the Church of God would do well to copy. Yes, I think that I shall go a little further and say that I think the Savior, then and there, dismissed her from that high ministry which, for once in her life, she had carried out. She washed His feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. It was the action of a love which had risen to a passion. It was an action such as shall be told for a memory of her everywhereand we may well imitate her penitence and her heroic courage, as well as her love to Christ. But, at the same time, we cannot always be doing heroic actions. Life is mainly made up of common deeds. It would not be possible to be always washing feet with tears, nor to be always unbraiding tresses to use them as a towel.   
The difficulty with some people is that they are always wanting to practice the sublime. Alas, they often fail by just one step and become ridiculous! They are always straining after effect and, hearing of what has been done once, by one choice person, they must do it themselves and they must keep on doing it! O my Sister, there may come a time when you will have to speak for Christ and speak openly before many, but tomorrow you had better go home and see to the children and make home happy for your husband. You will glorify Christ by darning stockings and mending the socks of the little ones, quite as surely as by washing His feet with tears. You make a great mistake if you have not a piety which will take you into domestic lifewhich will help you to make the common drudgery of life a Divine service. We need men who can serve God with the axe and plane, or behind a counter, or by driving a quill. These are the men we needbut there are many that crave to vault at once into a conspicuous place and perform an astounding deed! Having done it once, they become unsettled all the rest of their lives and do not seem as if they ever could take to plainly keeping the Ten Commandments and walking in the steps of Jesus. I wish that those who must flash and blaze would hear the Lord Jesus say to them, Go in peace. I mean any of you who really did distinguish yourselves on one occasion and deserved much praise from your Christian friends. I fear lest you should pine for unusual and even undesirable forms of service and become useless in the ordinary course of life. Now, do not be spoiled for life by having been allowed in one unusual deed, but hear the Master say, Your faith has saved you; go in peace. Serve Me in the daily avocations of life and bring glory to My name at home. Go from the strain of publicity to the gentler pressures of family duty.   
Do you not think that He even meant that she was now to cease from that singular fellowship with Him that she had enjoyed? She had been very close to Him, but she was, perhaps, never to be quite so near to Him again. In spirit she should be, but certainly not physically. It happens that those who take to the contemplative lifeand there is no life higher than thatare apt to think that they must forget the practical life. But it must not be so. We must do that which the Master bids us do as well as sit at His feet! I am tempted to tell a story which most of you must know concerning the famous man of God, who, in his cell, thought he saw the Lord Jesus and, under that persuasion, he worshipped with rapt delight. But just then the bell at the convent gate rang and it was his turn to stand at the door and deal out bread to the hungry. There was a little battle in his mind as to which he should dotarry with his Lord, or go to hand out bread to the poor mendicants. At last, he felt that he must do his duty even at the cost of the highest spiritual bliss. He went and distributed the bread and when he came back, to his great delight, the vision was still there and a voice said to him, If you had stayed, I would have gone; but as you have gone, I have therefore stayed to commune with you. The path of duty must be followed and no spiritual enjoyment can excuse us from it! Never offer one duty to God stained with the blood of another! Balance your duties and let not one press out another. Your faith has saved you; go in peace. Do not think that you need to be all day long at your Bible, or all the evening at your prayers. There is a time for everything. Let every holy work have its place, that your life may be a fair mosaic of brilliant colors, all set according to the Divine pattern, to make up a perfect character. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace and do the next thing, and the next, without weariness.   
That leads me to speak of what she was to go to. It seems to me that the Savior said, Now go home. You have been a fallen womanhome is the place for you. Go home to your mother and father, or other relatives. Seek a home. Be domesticated. Attend to your own work. Whatever your place is, go to it. Leaving daily duty was the source of your temptation return to walks of usefulness and habits of orderand this will be your safety. You will be less likely to be led away if you have work to occupy head, heart and hands.   
Did He not mean, Go now to your ordinary life-trial? Do you think yourself a very peculiar persona sort of saint that has to float in the air, or live upon roses? Do not fancy such a thing! I have heard of the Chinese, that they sell shoes with which you can walk on the clouds. And I believe that some people must have bought a pair of those remarkable articles, for their lives are spent in cloudland, walking as in a dream, upon high stilts of fond imaginations! Do not think great things of yourself. You are but a common man or woman. Do such duty as your fellow Christians do and do not think yourself a superior person. The worst people in the world to work with are superior people. Those are of no importance who think they are of great importance. Poor creature! It is not the Grace of God which turns your brain, but your own silly conceit.   
Go forth to your further service Go in peace. There are some to whom you can tell of My love. Oh, how you will tell it! You that have washed My feet with your tears, go and shower those tears over fallen ones like yourself. Go, use those eyes, that you may look My love right into their hearts as you are speaking to them. Go all your life in peace and do for Me all that I shall put in your way to do for Me. That is what I think our Lord meant. Brothers and Sisters, do not think of sitting here to enjoy yourselves, but go off and glorify your Redeemers name. Go!   
But then here is the point of itHe said, Go in peace. O my Brothers and Sisters, I desire that all of us who love the Lord may go all the rest of our life journey in peace. May pardoning love put us at peace concerning all our sins! O pardoned one, you love much, for you have had much forgivenlet your thoughts all run to loveand none to fear. Fret not about the pastthe dark, dishonorable past. The hand that was pierced has blotted it all out! The great Lord has frankly forgiven you all your debt. Let not that disturb you any longer. Go in peace! What a rest it is to be rid of the burden of sin and to know of a certainty, from the teaching of Gods Word, that your sins are forgiven you! This is peace which passes all understanding.   
Our Lord meant, next, Go in peace in reference to all the criticisms of all these people who have looked at you. Do not mind them. Do not trouble about them. What have they to do with you? It is enough for a servant if his master accepts himhe need not mind what others have to say about his service. Your faith has saved you. Forget all the unkind things they have said and do not trouble your heart about the cruel speeches they may yet make. Go in peace and be under no alarm as to upbraiding tongues.

And then I think He meant, Go in peace about what you have done. I know the mood of a word like that. I have preached the Gospel. I have thrown my whole soul into it and after it is all over I have felt bound to chide myself that I did not do much better as to style, or spirit, or length, or some other matter. Oh, but if the Master accepts it, one may go in peace about it! This woman had done a very extraordinary thing in washing Christs feet with tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head. And when she got away, she might have said to herself, I wonder why I was so bold? Was I not immodestly conspicuous? How could I have done it? How must I have looked when I was bathing His feet? For me, too such a sinner as I amfor me to have done it to the Blessed and Holy One! I fear He must have felt vexed at my rudeness!

Have you not sometimes done a brave thing for Christ and then, afterwards, felt just like that. I was a bold minx, you say, after all, to push myself so forward. The good young man, who has just preached for the first time, says, Well, I got through it this time, but I will never attempt it again, for I am sure that I am not fit for such holy work. So the Master says to this woman, Go in peace. I have accepted you and your loving service. Do not be troubled about what you have done. It is all sweet to Me and has a rich perfume of your great love. Never fret about what you have done. You have done the right thing. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. I want us to have just that kind of peacepeace about what we have done for our Lord, even as we have peace about forgiven sin and peace about human criticisms.

Go in peace. Oh, to possess, from this time forth, a holy quiet! We are so apt to grow fretful. I know some good Brothers and Sisters who have a swollen vein of suspicion about them that bleeds every now and then, and pains them greatly, and alarms other people. I know some Sistersthey are very good, but unreasonably fearful. They say that they are nervous. Perhaps that is the fact and so I will say no more. But, oh, that we could get them cured of this disease of the nerves! I would they could be quieted! I admire the members of the Society of Friends for this virtue beyond almost any other which they exhibitthey seem to be so steady, selfcontained and equable. They are a little slow, perhaps, but then they are very sure, firm, steadfast and calm. We are, some of us, too much in a hurry to go fast. If we were a little slower, we would be quicker. If we left our affairs more entirely with God, our peace might be like a river.

Yes, I would to God, dear Friends, that we might feel a constant joy. Why not? Nothing ought to trouble us, for we know that all things work together for good. If we live by faith, nothing can trouble us, for between here and Heaven we shall keep company with You, You Blessed One! And if the way You take is rough, the fact of Your being with us shall make it smooth for us. We will travel merrily with this as our march musicYour faith has saved you; go in peace.

Still, to come back to where I began, I dare say that the good woman thought that she would like to speak a word for the Lord. When they said that He could not forgive sin, would not she have liked to say, But He did forgive my sin and He changed my nature! How dare you speak thus? But the Savior said, Go. She was not called to contend. Thank God every child of God is not called to fight with the adversarythose of us who are men of war from our youth up take no pleasure in strife! We wish that, like this holy woman, we could be exempt from this warfare. She might well rejoice in her escape from the sacred conscription. Many a cuff and blow she thus avoided and, as her Captain sent her off the field, she might go home right happily.

She might have lost the blessed frame of mind in which she then was and this would have been a real injury to her. She was sweetly wrapped up in love and there her Lord would have her abide. He seems to say, You are too precious to be battered and bruised in battle. Gogo in peace. Dear Soul, you are so full of love to Me that I do not want you to be worried with fighting, contending and arguing. Go in peace. She would have done no good, I dare say, if she had ventured into a fray for which she was so unfitted. If she had spoken, she would have said something which the cruel Pharisees would have turned into a jest. So He said to her, Go in peace. Why should her feebleness give them an occasion for unholy triumph? All true hearts are not fit for fight. Besides, she had her Lord to be her Advocate, and there was no need for her to speak. Therefore He said, I can manage them without your presence. Go in peace. When we may believingly leave a difficulty with our Lord, it is faiths duty to go home quietly. No doubt, by going in peace, she would be doing greater service than she would by using her tongue upon these ungodly men. A quiet, happy life is often the noblest witness that we can bear for Christ. Therefore I say to everyone who loves the Lord, there are times when He will say to us, Do not enter into any of this conflict, turmoil and muddle. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.

The last word I have to say is this. There are many poor souls who talk about coming to Christ who are not yet saved. They are always hearing about faith and thinking of itand yet they never do, in very truth, believe. Now, do not hear nor debate any more about faith, but believe. Trust Jesus Christ and think no more about your own trusting. Think about it as a thing donenot as a thing to be done! God help you now to believe in Jesusand so pass over the bridge of belief to the golden shore of Jesus, Himself!

Well, but I notice some say that they believe, but it is not believing, because if it were believing, they would go in peace. A person comes to the bank with a check. He believes it to be honestly his and the signature to be correct. He puts it down on the counter and the clerk puts out the money. But look! The man does not take it. He stands and loafs about. The clerk looks at him, and wonders what he is doing. At last, when the person has been there long enough to wear the good mans patience out, the clerk says, Did you bring that check to have the money? Yes, I handed it in. Well, then, why do you not take the money and go about your business? If he is a sensible man, he delays no longerno, he would not have delayed so long. He takes the money and departs in peace.

Now, dear Soul, if you have a promise from GodHe that believes is not condemned, or, He that believes has everlasting lifedo you believe? Then take the blessing and go about your business! Do not keep on saying, Perhaps it is so, and, Perhaps it is not so. Do you believe that God speaks the Truth? If so, then take the promised blessing and enjoy it, for you are a saved man! But I have been going to a place of worship for years and I have been believing in a sort of a way, but I have never dared to say that I was saved. Then you are acting the part of an unbeliever! If you do not know that you are saved, how dare you go to sleep tonight? How can a man dare to eat his meals and go about his business, and yet say, I do not know whether I am saved or not? You may know it and you ought to know it. If you believe, you are saved! If you doubt that fact, you are rather an unbeliever than a Believer. Take up your money and go home. O you of little faith, why did you doubt? Trust Jesus! Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.

The Lord help you truly to believe, for Jesus sake! Amen. **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONRomans 8:15-39.** HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK719, 726, 702.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:   
Although far away from my usual congregation, I am not without some little comforting and guiding work to do among those whom my Master leads to this place. This sermon is quite in harmony with what I have had to say to seekers and feeble ones here. He fashions their hearts alike. There is a family likeness in the Lords people wherever we meet them! The same Truth of God also suits Believers of every nationall nations can live upon bread. It is a great delight to minister consolation. Had we nothing else to do, a pastors life would be spent in green pastures by the still waters. We never carry the lambs in our bosom without feeling our heart grow warmer. All the spiritual help we render comes back to us in the most effectual mannerto water others is to be watered yourself. The river which refreshes the fields is not dry, itself.

Therefore, our word from our retreat to all who are one with us in the Lords service is on this wise, Comfort the feeble-minded. Support the weak. In doing this, you shall, yourselves, be comforted and supported. Hands that now hang down will, by Gods Grace, be lifted up if they are used to raise others from the ground. Try this prescription, you that are yourselves cast down! It is recommended by the preacher.   
Mentone, January 3, 1891,   
*C. H. S.*

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2770 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

GO IN PEACE   
NO. 2770

A SERMON   
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, MARCH 16, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1883.

**And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace. Luke 7:50.**

THERE appears to have been four stages in Christs dealing with this woman. I know not what had preceded the narrative as we have it recorded in this ChapterI need not enter into that question now. There had, doubtless, been a work of the Spirit of God upon that womans heart, turning her from her sin to her Savior, but when she stood at our Masters feet, raining tears of penitence upon them, wiping them with the hairs of her head, giving to them kisses of love and anointing them with the ointment from the alabaster box, there were four stages in His gracious dealings with her.

The first was when He silently accepted her manifestations of love. When the copious tears from her eyes fell upon His feet, He did not withdraw them. When those feet were wiped with the luxuriant tresses of her hair, still He did not withdraw them. And when she ventured upon a yet closer familiarity and not only kissed His feet, but did not cease to kiss them, He still did not withdraw them, but quietly accepted all that she did. And when the precious ointment was poured in lavish abundance upon those precious feet of His, He did not upbraid her, He did not refuse her gifts, but tacitly accepted them, though without a word of acknowledgment just then. And I think it is a very blessed thing for any of you to be accepted before God, even though no word has come from His lips assuring you that it is so. When your tears, cries, secret love, and earnest seekingwhen your confession of sin, your struggle after faith and the dawning of your faith are just accepted by the Lord, though as yet He has not said to you, Your sins are forgiven you, it is a very blessed stage for you to have reached, for the Lord does not begin to accept anyone, even by a silence which means consent, and then draw back!

He accepted this womans love and gifts, though, for a time, He gave her no assurance of that acceptance and that fact must have greatly cheered her. Manoahs wife said to him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands. And I feel sure that if the Lord had not meant to bestow His mercy upon this woman, He would not have submitted to her washing of His feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her headand the subsequent continual kissing of them and anointing of them with the precious ointment.

Our Lords favorable inclination towards this woman was still more marked in the second stage of His dealings with her, when He began to defend her against her accuser. When Simons evil thoughts had condemned her and also her Lord, Jesus spoke that wonderful parable which set forth the greatness of this womans love and justified the extraordinary way in which she manifested it. Christ did not speak to her, but He spoke up for herand such action as that should be quite sufficient to satisfy the soul of a Believer in Him. So what if my Lord has not revealed Himself to me? He has revealed Himself to the Father for me! What if He has not spoken to me? Yet, if He has spoken to God on my behalfif He has spoken in the Scriptures in defense of poor sinners and advocated their cause in the High Court of Heaven, then how thankful I may beand how thankful they may be!

In the third stage, our Lord did still more for this woman, for He spoke to her these gracious words, Your sins are forgiven. Oh, how they must have dropped like dew into her poor soul! How she must have been refreshed by them! She, who was a sinnera great sinner, a public sinneryes, a professional sinnerhears her Savior say to her, Your sins are forgiven. The absolution pronounced by the man who calls himself a priest is utterly worthless! But it would be worthwhile to give a thousand worlds, if we had them, for absolution from our Great High Priest! Yes, He who knew all about the womans sin, He who had power on earth to forgive sins, had said to her, Your sins are forgiven. Was not that enough for her? Would not that short sentence set all the bells of her heart ringing as long as ever she lived?

Yes, but there was still more to follow, for the Lord spoke to her a second time and said, Your faith has saved you; go in peace. So she was not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but she was also delivered from the power of sin! Her faith had saved her! She was a saved woman, so she might go in peace! Now she is enjoying the sunlight of full assurance, the bright clear noontide of acknowledged acceptanceYour faith has saved you; go in peace. Some of us have this great blessing and we rejoice in it, but if others of you have not come quite so far on the heavenly road, do not begin murmuring or doubting! Bless the Lord Jesus Christ for any favor that He has shown to you, a poor unworthy sinner, and if you have even the faintest ray of the Light of God, pray Him to make your path like that of the just which shines more and more unto the perfect day. If you have received any token for good from your Lord, be thankful for it and expect, before long to hear in your soul the sweet music of this gracious word

*Your faith has saved you; go in peace.*

So we have come to our text, in which two things are very clearly revealed. The first is, an assuranceYour faith has saved you. And the second is, a dismissionGo in peace.

I. First, then, here is AN ASSURANCE: Your faith has saved you. That assurance teaches us, first, that salvation is a present thing Your faith has saved you. This is something that is already accomplished. You are savednot, you shall be savedbut you are even now in possession of the priceless gift of salvation. Your faith has saved you. All through the Scriptures and especially in the New Testament, it is plainly asserted that believers in Christ are already in possession of salvation. I will not stay to prove that it is so, but will rather explain it. If anyone says to me, In what respect are Believers saved? I answer that they are saved in the price, in the promise, in the principles and in the pledge of salvation. The alliteration will help you to remember these four points.

First, they are saved in the price of salvation. All that was necessary to save them from the result of sin has been endured by the Lord Jesus Christ. He has ransomed them by His death upon the Cross. He has stood in their place and borne their sin in His own body on the treeand suffered the full penalty for it. He has finished the transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in for them everlasting righteousness so that they are saved! The great work of their salvation was completed by Christ upon the Cross when He laid down His life for them and now they are, bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Next, they are saved in the promise of salvation. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who cannot lie, has declared that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Gods promise is certain of fulfillment, so that every believer in Jesus may be absolutely sure of salvation. We often take the check of a man who is known to be in a good financial position, and we consider his check to be as good as if it were hard cash. And, in like manner, we accept Gods promise of salvation as being just as sure as the salvation itself. Paul tells us that Gods promise has been confirmed by an oath, that by two Immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

Then, thirdly, we have salvation in the principles of it. That is to say, all those Graces which constitute the essentials of a perfect character, are in every true child of God. There is given to us, when we are regenerated, the very same life which we are to live forever in Heaven. We have now the root, the bulb, the seed out of which immortality and perfection will most surely growwe may not yet be perfect, but we have that which will come to perfection! We have within us a new nature which cannot sin because it is born of God and this will gradually overcome the old nature, as the Israelites drove out the Canaanites, and we shall be perfect before the Throne of the Most High. A man may have, in a very small room, a whole field of wheat lying in embryo in the seed which is to be sown in the springtime, and reaped in the autumn! And we have, in the gift of Gods Grace, all Heaven in embryo in the seeds of faith and love, and the work of the Holy Spirit within our souls. Thus, we have salvation in the principles of it.   
And, once more, we have salvation in the pledge of it, for, when the Holy Spirit enters our heart, His coming there is the pledge and the earnest of Heaven! There is a difference between a pledge and an earnest and what I really mean is rather an earnest than a pledge. A pledge is taken back, but an earnest is retained. A man who has his wage to take at the end of the week, may get some earnest money in the middle of the week and, if his master is what he should be, that will be a pledge that he will get the rest. So the Holy Spirit is the Divine Person who virtually puts Heaven into us and makes us fit to be in the Heaven, which Christ has gone to prepare for us. What a mercy it is to have the witness of the Holy Spirit, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our Heavenly Fatherto have aspirations after holiness which we never had in our unregenerate state! All this is the pledge of Heaven and in having the pledge, we have practically the salvation itself. The Holy Spirit would not have come into our hearts and given us all these blessings if He had not meant to perfect that which concerns us, and to save us in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

Salvation, then, is a present thing, in price, in promise, in principles and in pledge. But the important question for each of you to answer is Have you obtained that salvation? If you have not, you are in a truly terrible condition, for you are condemned already because you have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. But if you have obtained this salvation, then you are indeed rich to all eternity! Perhaps you live in one poor room and have to work very hard for a livelihood, yet you are much richer than those emperors and kings who have much earthly pomp and state, but who are not the subjects of Gods Gracefor you are saved! The Lord has given you that salvation which can never be taken away from you. So rejoice in this salvation and, if you have little else to cover you, let this salvation be your royal apparel! Let this salvation load your table with heavenly dainties! Let this salvation smooth your path, however rough it may be, and cheer your heart, however great your trials may be!

So, this assurance means that salvation is a present thing. Next, it teaches us that salvation is obtained by faith. Your faith has saved you. But, says someone, Was it not the Lord Jesus Christ who saved her? Yes, certainly it was, but do you see what Christ does? He is so fond of Faith that He takes the crown from His own head and puts it on the head of Faith, as He says to the woman, Your faith has saved you. Is that a safe thing for Christ to do? Oh, yes! Because Faith at once removes the crown from her own head and puts it back upon Christs, saying, Not unto me, not unto me, but unto Your name be all the Glory. Christ loves to crown Faith because Faith loves to crown Christ! As for boastingFaith cannot tolerate that for a moment! She hurls it out of the window and will have nothing further to do with it. Our Savior speaks thus, Your faith has saved you, because He knows that it will be understood that Faith is only the connecting link with Himselfthat He really works the salvation, but that the faith of the Believer is the means of obtaining it.   
There are four things, concerning this faith which I want you to notice, and I will put them under the same letter that I used before, so that it may be the easier for you to remember them. First, this womans faith was a personal faithYour faith has saved you. O dear Friends, I implore you to give up all idea of being saved by anybody elses faith! You must believe in Jesus for yourself or you will be lost forever! What a dreadful lie it is when men stand up as sponsors for a child and promise and vow various things, none of which are within their power to perform! As to anything that anybody ever promised with regard to your soul, what can another person do for you in such a matter as that? The most earnest faith in your parents can never bring you to Heaven unless you, also, have faith in Jesus! There is a great blessing which may come to us through the faith of others, if they exercise it in prayer on our behalf, but, still, salvation can never come to us apart from our own personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said to the woman, Your faith has saved younot Peters faith, nor Jamess faith, nor Johns faith, but her own! And you, also, must have faith for yourself, or you will assuredly be lost! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. But if you do not personally believe on Him, you cannot be saved!   
Notice, next, that this womans faith was a

practical faith. She was saved by faith, and not by works, but she was not saved by a faith which did not produce works. Think of her worksshe washes the Masters feet with her tears and wipes them with the hairs of her head. She kisses them repeatedly and anoints them with her precious ointment. I may truly say of her, She has done what she could. All that her affection prompted, her devotion performedfor she had the faith which works by loveand if you, dear Friends, have a faith that never works for Christ, I beg you to get rid of it at once, for it will turn out to be a bastard faith! The faith that never kisses His feet is a faith that He will tread under His feet! The faith that never anoints Him is a faith that will have no fragrance in His esteem and He will not accept it. We are not saved by works and faith combined, much less by works alone, but, nevertheless, the faith which saves is not a barren faithit produces the good fruit of love and service for Christ.   
So this womans faith was personal and practical. It was also a penitent faith. While she stood at Christs feet, behind Him, her eyes showered tears upon them as she wept over her sin. I am always doubtful of the genuineness of a dry-eyed faith. The longer I live, the more I am afraid of those people who profess to leap into faith without any repentance! And there seem to be some, in these days, who do not believe in the old-fashioned sorrow for sin. I would rather see some men less confidant than they are if they were more humbled on account of their past transgressions. This woman manifested a truly penitent faith.   
And, once more, it was a pure faithI use that word, pure, to help your memory. I mean that her faith was perfectly simple. She wept, but she did not trust in her weeping. She anointed Christs feet with the ointment, but she did not rely upon her self-sacrifice. She kissed His feet, but she did not depend upon her kisses. Where was her trust all placed? Why, upon Christand upon Him alone! I do not know that she had ever read the Old Testament. Certainly, she could not have read the New Testament, for it was not written then! She may not have known much about the Bible, but she knew Him who is the very sum and substance of the Bible! I have heard people talk about a Body of Divinity, but there never was but one in the highest sense of the term, and Jesus Christ is that Body of Divinity! He is, in the true sense, the Word of God. This woman had seen Him, she had learned to know HimHe had forgiven her sin and she had come into that house full of love to Him, full of trust in Him and now, from His own lips, she receives this gracious assurance, Your faith has saved you. It was faith in Him and in nothing else! There was not and there could not have been, in her case, anything to trust to but Christ. She was, in a very emphatic sense, a sinner. She had not set herself up as being a person of good character. There were, no doubt, scores of people in the city who could have borne lamentable evidence of her sinfulness. But she trusted herself absolutely to Jesus Christ, the sinners Savior, and she trusted Him aloneand so her faith was proved to be of that pure kind that saves all who exercise it. Let yours be like that, dear Friendpersonal, practical, penitential and pure!   
Further, upon this first point, note that salvation may be a matter of assurance. This woman had the assurance from Christs own lips, Your faith has saved you. Those of you who were at the Prayer Meeting here last Monday night, will remember that one of our Brothers, when he was giving an address, made you smile when he said, He that believes on the Son has everlasting life, and then added, h-a-sthat spells, got it. That is a strange mode of spelling which is not taught at the Board School, yet it is a heavenly way of spelling and it is perfectly correct. Ha-sthat spells, got it. If you have the blessing of salvation, there is a possibility of knowing that you have it. He that believes on the Son has everlasting life. He has got it! He has got it now!   
I would believe it, one says, if Jesus Christ spoke to me and said so. My dear Friend, He has said it in His Word! Is that Word a lie, or is it true? If it is true, then what more do you need? Christ has written it in His Word and I like a thing that is written even better than that which is spoken. You know how a man says, when he wants a guarantee about a bargain, Give it to me in writing, for some people will swear that they never said what we heard them say, so give it to me in black and white. Well, here it is in black and whiteHe that believes on the Son has everlasting life. And again, There is therefore nownow, mark youno condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. And yet again, Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, cannot you also say, got it?   
Oh, but! says someone, I need evidence that it is so. Very well, you shall have evidence! You shall have the Witness of the Spirit who has renewed you. You shall have the witness of your changed life. You shall have the witness of your new character, but, first of all, is not Christs Word sufficient for you? Is not Christs written Word enough? Is not this Book, which you believe to have been Inspired by the Holy Spirit and which reveals the Word of the Lord, enough for you? It is enough for me! If all the men in the world were to come, one after another, after I had read something in the Bibleand they were all to say, in their different languages, That is a lie, I would not believe it an atom the less! And suppose they were all to stand up and say, It is true? I would reply, Of course it is! But I do not need your word to confirm what Christ has said. I am perfectly satisfied if He has said it. And there it standsand all the powers of Hell cannot prevail to overthrow it! Here is the solid rock for a soul to rest upon! Christ says, at this moment, to everyone who believes in Him and trusts in His blood and righteousness, Your faith has saved you; go in peace.   
II. So we come to the latter part of our text, which is A DISMISSION Go in peace. What did our Lord mean by saying this?   
I think He meant, first, Leave this place of controversy and go in peace. Did you notice that it was when those who sat at the meal with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that also forgives sins? that He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace? I See the black looks of those Jews, those Pharisees, round about Simons table. Why, they are as sour as vinegar and full of all kinds of skepticism! So the Savior says to the woman, Go home, good Soul, away from all of them. So, dear Friends, whenever you meet with a book that is full of skepticism and unbeliefespecially you who have lately found the Savioryou had better throw it away! Your faith has saved you; go in peace. Unbelief will be no help to youyour faith has already saved youwhat more do you need? You have the assurance within your own soul that you are saveddo not go anywhere, or do anything to damage that assurance! I do not think it is worthwhile to go through a horse pond and get covered with filth, just for the pleasure of being washed afterwards!  
It may be that some strong man, like another Samson, may have to go in among the Philistines and pull their temple down about their ears, but poor Hannah could not do that, and those who are like herthe women of a sorrowful spirithad better go home and get out of the way of that set of wranglers! They may even be wrangling professors, squabbling about this doctrine and thatand perhaps not understanding any of them properlyso the Savior says to you, You have the assurance of salvation; do not let anybody worry you out of that. Go in peace. This is what the Apostle means when he says, Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations.   
Then, next, I think our Savior meant His words to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace, to be a kind of dismissing of her case from the Court. Here is Simon, in thought, accusing her and thinking that she ought not to be permitted to come and touch the Masters feet. And here is the Lord Jesus Christ not only becoming a pleader for her, but deciding the case in her favor as He says to her, Your faith has saved you; go in peace. This was in effect saying, Your case is dismissed; there is nothing against you. The Court clears you; go home, good Soul. What a mercy it is when the Lord speaks thus to anyone! Who shall lay anything to the charge of Gods elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Christ has dismissed us from the Court of Justice, so let us go in peace.   
May not our Lord also have meant something more than we see upon the surface of these words? May He not have meant, Go home in peace to your daily avocations? Ah, she had done a deal of mischief in that home of hers by her sin, for there never was a fallen woman who brought a blessing to her family while she lived in sin. And now that the Savior has given to her the assurance of salvation, He says to her, Go home, and attend to your ordinary household duties. Go and act as a woman should. Fulfill your part as a mother, or a daughter, or a servant, or whatever your calling may be. Go in peace.   
Do you not also think that this dismissing word would last her as long as she livedand that all her life, she would seem to hear the Savior saying to her, Go in peace? Perhaps she was to go upstairs and lie there illbut she was to go in peace. Possibly she was to come down and to confront opposition and persecutionif so, she was still to hear this message, Go in peace. I think that word would come to her every morning as soon as she awoke. And when she was about to close her eyes and go to sleep, she would still hear it. With such a gracious message as that, she could even go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and fear no evil. It may be that is just what the Lord meant it forthat when she came to dieand she may have died a martyrs death, we cannot tellat any rate, whenever she came to die, this message was ringing in her ears, Go in peace.

The practical point that I want to bring home to you Christian people, to you who are saved, is this. Beloved Friends, as you go to your families, as you go through life, as you go into eternity, I pray you to go in peace. It is Heaven begun below to possess the peace of God, which passes all understanding. Peace should be the continual portion of all Believers. This is what the angels sang when our Lord Jesus appeared on earth, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men. And as it was at the beginning of our Saviors life, so it was at the end, for this was our Lords legacy to all His disciples, Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. That which gives one of His titles even to God Himselffor He is called the God of Peaceshould be very precious to your soul.   
Peace is the fit result of what the Savior has done for you. Has He forgiven you? Then you have peace. Has He saved you? Oh, then, feel an inward peace which none can take from you! Did He die for you? Then you can never die, in the full meaning of the word, so be at rest about that matter! Has He risen for you? Then, because He lives, you shall live also! Therefore, let not your heart be troubled, but be at peace. Will He come again to receive you unto Himself? Oh, then, let your peace be like a river flowing from the very Throne of God!   
This peace within your heart is the blessed fruit of the Spirit of Peace. Where the Spirit of God is, there must be peace, for He is the Sacred Dove. The fruit of the Spirit within us should be quietness and assurance forever. Do not despise this priceless gift of peace, but, as saved souls, covet more and more of it. Do you know what I mean by talking thus to you? Suppose you are thinking to yourself, Alas, I am going home to an ungodly husband? Never mind, dear wife, go in peace. Oh, but, tomorrow I have to go out among ungodly men. Never mindgo in peace. Do not go among them disturbed and fluttered, but sing to yourself softly   
*My heart is resting, O my God!*   
Go in peace. Perhaps you are going to the sickbed of one of your dearest friends. Possibly there is one at home who is so depressed in spirit as to depress you, too. Never mind! Go in peace. It will strengthen you to have your own heart at peace.   
I remember once seeing an accident on a hill. I feared that a man had broken his leg and I know that someone ran to fetch a doctor. And when he came, to my surprise, he walked coolly up to where the man was. If I had been sent for, I would have run myself out of breath to get to the poor man! And when I reached him, I would have been all of a tremble, and would not have been able to do anything properly. But when the doctor heard that there was a man with his leg broken, he walked quietly to the spot and the result was that he was able to do his work properly. Our Lord Jesus Christ was never in a hurry. It is marvelous to contemplate the leisure of the greatest Worker who ever lived! He always moved along with a holy calm and quiet dignity and He, therefore, did everything well. Do you likewisego in peacefor it shall be your strength. Sometimes, your strength is to sit still and, always, the joy of the Lord shall be your strength.   
This is the way in which you are to glorify God in your lifeby going in peace. When this woman went back to her homethat same woman who had been such a poor, trembling, broken, bruised reed, because of her sinthose who knew her enquired, What has happened to Mary?if that was her name. I do not know. What has happened to her? Why, she looks so placid, so calm, she is not like the same woman that she used to be. I have no doubt that she was rather quick-tempered, for most very loving spirits are like that. But now, say her friends, she takes things so differently. She is so still, quiet and restful. Just soand then they took knowledge of her, that she had been with Jesus, and had learned of Him, for that was His style and His manner, also!   
Ah, dear Hearts, if Christ has saved you, you have the best reason in all the world for being the quietest, happiest people who ever lived! One said, one day, to a person who had spoken of his salvation in tones of assurance, You ought to be the happiest man that lives. And he answered, So I am. It was well known that he was very poor, that he did not know where he would get a second coat for his back, but, then, he thought that he did not need a second coat till he had worn out the first one! They said that he did not know where he would get his next breakfast, but he had had his supper, so he was quite content to wait till God should give him his breakfast. He had such simple faith in God that though he was so very poor, yet he said he was the happiest man in all the world!   
Go in for that, Beloved, for surely you have a right to it if you are a believer in Jesus! Your greatest sorrows are over, your heaviest burdens Christ has carried, the most terrible disaster that could ever happen to you has been averted by Him, the most fearful calamity that you once had cause to dread can never come to you! You are an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ! You shall have all you really need in this life and you shall have the Heaven of God in the life to come! The supreme act of God, by which He eternally blesses, has already been performed upon you! The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have all united to bless youand the Covenant of Peace is signed, sealed, ratified and you must and shall conquer at the last! So, Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid, but say to yourself   
*All that remains for me   
Is but to love and sing,   
And wait until the angels come   
To bear me to the King.*   
God bless you, for Christs sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **EPHESIANS 2.**

Verse 1. And you has He quickened. You, who were dead by nature, are now made alive unto God by the Holy Spirit. If you had nothing else to think of, all day long, but just these five words, they might suffice to lift you up to the very heights of grateful adoration of your quickening LordAnd you has He quickened.

1. Who were dead in trespasses and sins. These were your grave clothes, or the charnel-house in which you would have continued to lie if the quickening power of God the Holy Spirit had not brought you out into newness of life!

2. Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. This is what happened to us all in our unregenerate statewe were carried along by the world, loving what it loved, judging from its views and acting according to its maxims. No, worse than that, the devil himself had dominion over us, as he had over the rest of the world. The prince of the power of the air was the spirit that worked in us as well as in the rest of the children of disobedience. What a glorious deliverance it was to be saved from the power of death and the dominion of Satanand to be made partakers of everlasting life!

3. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. That is the highest point to which human nature can attainleft to itself, it makes us children of wrath. Even those who are now most assuredly the children of God were once the children of wrath! There was no difference, in that respect, between them and the rest of mankind. It is only the marvelous mercy and Grace of God which have made us to differ from our fellow creatures who are still dead in trespasses and sins.

4, 5. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ. Again let us praise the Lord with all our hearts for what He has done for us. It is truly wonderful that He should have loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sinswith no feeling, no holy desire, no repentancewhile indifference, heartlessness, powerlessness covered everything! We were dead in sin, yet He loved us, and therefore it was that He quickened us together with Christ.

5. (By Grace you are saved). Not by human merit, not by the energy of our own will, but, by Grace you are saved.   
6. And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We are not only alive, you see, but we are elevated into the highest position of the new lifemade to live with Christ and in Christmade to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.   
7, 8. That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His Grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by Grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Both the salvation and the faith that makes it ours are the gift of God! Twice over the Apostle tells us that we are saved by Grace, yet men will not believe it. They will, somehow or other, get away from this humbling, but true and precious Doctrine. They will contrive, by some method or other, to squeeze in their own works and their own willand so rob Christ, if not of His crown, yet of some of its brightest jewels.   
9, 10. Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship. If we have good works, as I trust we have, yet even they are the production of Gods Grace! Praise and glory for them belong to Him, and not to usFor we are His workmanship.   
10. Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. This is the great objective of our electionwe are elected that we may be holy and that we may walk in ordained good workswho can rightly quarrel with such a Divine Purpose as this?   
11, 12. Therefore remember that you, being in time past, Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. That is the condition of every unbeliever at this timehaving no hope, and without God in the world. Mr. Hume once made the remark that he knew many Christians who were afraid to die, but he was not. The Christian man, to whom he said this, pointed to an ox grazing in the meadow and said, You have reached about as high as that bullock has, for he, also, is not afraid to die. But pray tell, Mr. Hume, enquired the good man, have you any hope after death? At that question, the philosopher shook his head, for he knew nothing of such a hope as that! The utmost point he could reach was, by indifference, to raise himself above fear. Having no hope, is a true description of every man who has no faith in our crucified and risen Savior.

13. But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. That is the great attracting power which draws us from our natural distance and brings us into nearness to God! How we ought to prize that precious blood which does so much for us! It cleanses us from sin. It pleads for us before the Throne of God and here, you see, having made a way of access for us, it also conducts us along that way and brings us near to God.   
14. For He is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us. There are now no privileges for the Jew from which the Christian is shut out, for Christ has made both one. There is now neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, for all Believers are one in Christ Jesus.   
15-22. Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of two, one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy Temple in the Lord: in whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. May we realize that the Holy Spirit is inhabiting His own Church at this moment and, especially, may all of us who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, realize our own position in that spiritual Temple which is the habitation of God through the Spirit, for Christs 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 #1162 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SAVING FAITH   
NO. 1162

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, MARCH 15, 1874, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Your faith has saved you.   
Luke 7:50; Luke 18:42.**

I do not remember that this expression is found anywhere else in the Word of God. It is found in these two places in the Gospel by Luke, but not in any other Gospel. Luke also gives us, in two other places, a kindred and almost identical expression, Your faith has made you whole. This you will find used in reference to the woman whose issue of blood had been staunched, (Luke 8:48), and in connection with that one of the 10 lepers who returned to praise the Savior for the cure he had received (Luke 17:19). You will find the expression, Your faith has made you whole once in Matthew and twice in Mark, but you find it twice in Luke and, together with the twice repeated words of our text, Your faith has saved you.

Are we wrong in supposing that the long discussions of Luke with the Apostle Paul led him not only to receive the great doctrine of Justification by Faith which Paul so plainly taught and to attach to faith that high importance which Paul always did, but also to have a peculiar memory for those expressions which were used by the Savior in which faith was manifestly honored to a very high degree? Albeit Luke would not have written anything which was not true for the sake of maintaining the grand doctrine so clearly taught by the Apostle, yet I think his full conviction of it would help to recall to his memory more vividly those words of the Lord Jesus from which it could be more clearly learned or illustrated.

Be that as it may, we know that Luke was Inspired and that he has written neither more nor less than what the Savior actually said. Therefore we may be quite sure that the expression, Your faith has saved you, fell from the Redeemers lips and we are bound to accept it as the pure, unquestionable Truth of God. And we may repeat it, ourselves, without fear of misleading others, or trenching upon any other Truth. I mention this because the other day I heard an earnest friend say that faith did not save us, at which announcement I was rather surprised. The Brother, it is true, qualified the expression, and showed that he meant to make it clear that Jesus saved usand not our own act of faith.

I agreed with what he meant, but not with what he said, for he had no right to use an expression which was in flat contradiction to the distinct declaration of the Savior, Your faith has saved you. We are not to strain any expression to make it mean more than the Speaker intendedand it is well to guard words from being misunderstood. But on the other hand, we may not go quite so far as absolutely to make negative a declaration of the Lord Himself, however we may mean to qualify it. It is to be qualified if you like, but it is not to be contradicted, for there it stands, Your faith

has saved you.

Now we shall, this morning, by Gods help, inquire what was it that saved the two persons whose history will come before us? It was their faith. Our second inquiry will be what kind of faith was it which saved them? And then thirdly, what does this teach us in reference to faith?

I. WHAT WAS IT THAT SAVED the two persons whose history we are about to consider? In the penitent womans case, her great sins were forgiven her and she became a woman of extraordinary loveshe loved much, for she had much forgiven. I feel, in thinking of her, something like an eminent father of the Church who said, This narrative is not one which I can well preach upon. I had far rather weep over it in secret. That womans tears. That womans unbraided tresses wiping the Saviors feet. Her coming so near to her Lord in such company. Facing such proud cavilers with such fond and resolute intent of doing honor to Jesus. Verily, among those that have loved the Savior, there has not lived a greater than this woman who was a sinner!

Yet, for all that, Jesus did not say to her, Your love has saved you. Love is a golden apple of the tree of which faith is the root, and the Savior took care not to ascribe to the fruit that which belongs only to the root. This loving woman was also right notable for her repentance. Mark you well those tears. Those were no tears of sentimental emotion, but a rain of holy heart-sorrow for sin. She had been a sinner and she knew it. She remembered, well, her multitude of iniquities and she felt each sin deserved a tearand there she stood weeping herself away because she had offended her dear Lord. Yet it is not said, Your repentance has saved you. Her being saved caused her repentance, but repentance did not save her. Sorrow for sin is an early token of Divine Grace within the heart, yet it is nowhere said, Your sorrow for sin has saved you.

She was a woman of great humility. She came behind the Lord and washed His feet, as though she felt herself only able to be a menial servant to perform works of drudgery, and to find a pleasure in so serving her Lord. Her reverence for Him had reached a very high point. She regarded Him as a king and she did what has sometimes been done for monarchs by zealous subjectsshe kissed the feet of her hearts Lord who well deserved the homage. Her loyal reverence led her to kiss the feet of her Lord, the Sovereign of her soul, but I do not find that Jesus said, Your humility has saved you. Or that He said, Your reverence has saved you. He put the crown upon the head of her faith and said expressly, Your faith has saved you; go in peace.

In the case of the blind man to whom my second text refersthis man was notable for his earnestness. He cried, and cried aloud, Son of David, have mercy on me. He was notable for his importunity, for they who would have silenced him rebuked him in vain. He cried so much the more, Son of David, have mercy on me! But I do not discover that Christ attributed his salvation to his prayers, earnest and importunate though they were. It is not written, Your prayers have saved you. It is written, Your faith has saved you. He was a man of considerable and clear knowledge, and he had a distinct apprehension of the true Character of Christhe scorned to call Him Jesus of Nazareth, as the crowd did, but he proclaimed Him, Son of David.

And in the presence of that throng he dared avow his full conviction that the humble Man, dressed in a peasants garb, who was threading His way through the throng, was none other than the royal heir of the royal line of Judah, and was, indeed, the fulfiller of the type of David, the expected Messiah, the King of the Jews, the Son of David! Yet I do not find that Jesus attributed his salvation to his knowledge, to his clear apprehension, or to his distinct avowal of His Messiahship. No, He said to him, Your faith has saved you, laying the entire stress of his salvation upon his faith.

This being so in both cases, we are led to ask, what is the reason for it? What is the reason why, in every case, in every man that is saved, faith is the great instrument of salvation? Is it not, first, because God has a right to choose what way of salvation He pleases, and He has chosen that men should be saved, not by their works, but by their faith in His dear Son? God has a right to give His mercy to whom He pleases. He has a right to give it when He pleases. He has a right to give it in what mode He pleases. And know this, O sons of men, that the decree of Heaven is immutable and stands fast foreverHe that believes and is baptized shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned.

To this there shall be no exception! Jehovah has made the rule and it shall stand. If you would have salvation, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. But if not, salvation is utterly impossible to you. This is the appointed way. Follow it because it leads to Heaven. Refuse it and you must perish! This is Gods sovereign determination, He that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God. Jehovahs will be done! If this is His method of Grace, let us not kick against it! If He determines that faith shall save, so let it be. Only, Good Master, create and increase our faith!

But while I attribute this to the sovereign choice of God, I do see, for Scripture plainly indicates it, a reason in the nature of things why faith should thus have been selected. The Apostle tells us it is of faith that it might be of Grace. If the condition of salvation had been either feeling or works, then such is the depravity of our nature that we should inevitably have attributed the merit of salvation to our works or our feelings! We would have claimed some credit for our salvation! It matters not how low the condition may have been, man would have still considered that there was something required of him, that something came from him, and that, therefore, he might take some credit to himself.

But no man, unless he is demented, ever claims credit for believing the Truth of God! If he hears that which convinces him, he is convinced. And if he is persuaded, he is persuadedand he feels that it could not well be otherwise. He attributes the effect to the Truth and the influence used. He does not go about and boast because he believes what is so clear to him that he cannot doubt it. If he did so boast of spiritual faith, all thinking men would say at once, Why do you boast in the fact of having believed,

and especially when this believing would never have been yours if it had not been for the force of the Truth of God which convinced you, and the working of the Spirit of God which constrained you to believe?

Faith is chosen by Christ to wear the crown of salvation becauselet me contradict myselfit refuses to wear the crown. It was Christ that saved the penitent woman! It was Christ that saved that blind beggar! But He takes the crown from His own head, so dear is Faith to Him, and He puts the diadem upon the head of Faith and says, Your faith has saved you, because He is absolutely certain that Faith will never take the glory to herself, but will again lay the crown at His pierced feet, and say, Not unto myself be glory, for You have done it! You are the Savior, and You alone.

In order, then, to illustrate and to protect the interests of Sovereign Grace, and to shut out all vain glorying, God has been pleased to make the way of salvation to be by faith, and by no other means! Nor is this all. It is clear to everyone who chooses to think that in order to the renewal of the heart, which is the chief part of salvation, it is well to begin with faith, because faith, once rightly exercised, becomes the mainspring of the entire nature. The man believes that he is forgiven. What then? He feels gratitude to Him who has pardoned him. Feeling gratitude, it is but natural that he should hate that which displeases his Saviorand should love intensely that which is pleasing to Him who saved himso that faith operates upon the entire nature and becomes the instrument in the hand of the regenerating Spirit by which all the faculties of the soul are put into the right condition!

As a man thinks in his heart so is he, but his thinking comes out of his believing! If he is put right in his believing, then his understanding will operate upon his affections and all the other powers of his manhoodand old things will pass away and all things will become new through the wonderful effect of the faithwhich is of the operation of God. Faith works by love and through love it purifies the souland the man becomes a new creature. Do you see, then, the wisdom of God? He may choose what way He will, but He chooses a way which at once guards His Grace from our felonious boasts, and, on the other hand, produces in us a holiness which otherwise never would have been there! Faith in salvation, however, is not the meritorious cause. Nor is it in any sense the salvation itself.

Faith saves us just as the mouth saves from hunger. If we are hungry, bread is the real cure for hunger, but still it would be right to say that eating removes hunger, seeing that the bread, itself, could not benefit us unless the mouth should eat it. Faith is the souls mouth whereby the hunger of the heart is removed. Christ is also the bronze serpent lifted upall the healing virtue is in Himyet no healing virtue comes out of the bronze serpent to any who will not look. So the looking is rightly considered to be the act which saves.

True, in the deepest sense, it is Christ lifted up who savesto Him be all the glorybut without looking to Him you cannot be saved, so that *There is life in a look,*

as well as life in the Savior to whom you look! Nothing is yours until you appropriate it. If you are enriched, the thing appropriated enriches you. Yet it is not incorrect but strictly right to say it is the appropriation of the blessing which makes you rich. Faith is the hand of the soul. Stretched out, it lays hold of the salvation of Christand so by faith we are saved. Your faith has saved you. I need not dwell longer on this point. It is selfevident from the text that faith is the great means of salvation.

II. WHAT KIND OF FAITH WAS IT that saved these people? I will mention, first, the essential agreements, and then, secondly, the differentia, or the points in which this faith differed in its external manifestations in the two cases. In the instances of the penitent woman and the blind beggar, their faith was fixed, alone, in Jesus. You cannot discover anything floating in their faith in Jesus which adulterated itit was unmixed faith in Him. The woman pressed forward to Himher tears fell on Himher ointment was for Him. Her unloosed tresses were a towel for His feetshe cared for no one else, not even for the disciples whom she respected for His sake. Her whole spirit and soul were absorbed in Him. He could save her. He could blot out her sins. She believed Him and she did it unto Him.

The same was the case with that blind man. He had no thought of any ceremonies to be performed by priests. He had no idea of any medicine which might be given him by physicians. His cry was, Son of David, Son of David. The only notice he took of others was to disregard them and still to cry, Son of David, Son of David. What will you that I shall do unto you? was the Lords question. And it answered to the desire of the blind mans soul, for he knew that if anything were done it must be done by the Son of David.

It is essential that our faith must rest alone on Jesus. Mix anything with Christ and you are undone. If your faith shall stand with one foot upon the rock of His merits and the other foot upon the sand of your own duties, it will fall and great will be the fall, too! Build wholly on the Rock, for if so much as a corner of the edifice shall rest on anything beside, it will ensure the ruin of the whole

*None but Jesus, none but Jesus   
Can do helpless sinners good.*   
All true faith is alike in this respect.

The faith of these two was alike in its confession of unworthiness. What did she mean by standing behind Him? What did her tears mean, her ever flowing tears, but that she felt unworthy to draw near to Jesus? And what did the beggars cry mean, Have mercy on me? Note the stress he lays upon it. Have mercy on me. He does not claim the cure by merit, nor ask it as a reward. He appealed to mercy. Now I care not whose faith it is, whether it is that of David in his bitter cries of the 51st Psalm, or whether it is that of Paul in his highest exaltation upon being without condemnation through Christthere is always in connection with true faith a thorough and deep sense that it is mercy, mercy alone, which saves us from the wrath to come.

Dear Hearer, do not deceive yourself! Faith and boasting are as opposite to one another as the two poles. If you come before Christ with your righteousness in your hands, you come without faith! And if you come

with faith you must also come with confession of sinfor true faith always walks hand in hand with a deep sense of guilt before the Most High. This is so in every case. Their faith was alike, moreover, in defying and conquering opposition. Little do we know the inward struggles of the penitent as she crossed the threshold of Simons house. He will repel you, the stern, cold Pharisee will say, Get out of here, you whore! How dare you defile the doors of honest men. But whatever may happen she passes through the door. She comes to where the feet of the Savior are stretched out towards the entrance as He is reclining at the tableand there she stands.

Simon glanced at herhe thought his glance would scare her offbut her love to Christ was too well rooted to be withered by him. No doubt he made many signs of his displeasure and showed that he was horrified at such a creature being anywhere near him! But she took no notice of him. Her Lord was there and she felt safe. Timid as a dove, she trembled not while He was near. But she returned no defiant glances for Simons haughty looks! Her eyes were occupied with weeping. She did not turn aside to demand an explanation of his unkind motions, for her lips were all engrossed with kissing those dear feet. Her Lord, her Lord, was all to her! She overcame through faith in Him and held her ground. She did not leave the house till He dismissed her with, Go in peace.

It was the same with the blind man. He said, Son of David, have mercy on me. They cried, Hush! Why these clamors, blind beggar? His eloquence is music, do not interrupt Him. Never Man spoke as He is speaking. Every tone rings like the harps of the angels. Hush! How dare you spoil His discourse? But over and above them all went up the importunate prayer, Son of David, have mercy upon me, and he prevailed. All true faith is opposed. If your faith is never tried, it is not born of the race of the Church militant. This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith, but it is indicated in that very declaration that there must be something to overcome and that faith must wage war for its existence!

Once more, the faith of these two persons was alike in being openly avowed. I will not say that the avowal took the same form in both, for it did notbut still it was equally open. There is the Savior and there comes the weeping penitent. She loves Him. Is she ashamed to say so? It may bring her reproach. It will certainly rake up the old reproaches against her, for she has been a sinner. Never mind what she has

been, nor who may be present to see her. She loves her Lord and she will show it. She will bring the ointment and she will anoint His feet, even in the presence of Pharisees, Pharisees who would say, Is this one of the disciples of Christ? A pretty convert to boast of! A fine conquest this, for His kingdom! A harlot becomes a disciple! What next and what next?

She must have known and felt all that, but still there was no concealment. She loved her Lord and she would avow it. And so in the very house of the Pharisee, there being no other opportunity so convenient, she comes forward and without words, but with actions far more eloquent than words, she says, I love Him. These tears shall show it. This ointment shall diffuse the knowledge of it, as its sweet perfume fills the room. And every lock of my hair shall be a witness that I am my Lords and He is mine. She avowed her faith.

And so did the blind man. He did not sit there and say, I know He is the Son of David, but I must not say it. They said, some of them contemptuously, and others indifferently, It is Jesus of Nazareth. But he will not have it so. You Son of David, says he! And loud above their noise I hear him cry like a herald proclaiming the King, Son of David. Why, Sirs, it seems to me he was exalted to a high office! He became the herald of the King and proclaimed Him, and this belongs to a high officer of State in our country! The blind beggar showed great decision and courage. He cried, in effect, Son of David You are Son of David! I proclaim You Son of David! You shall be proclaimed, whoever may deny it! Only turn Your eyes and have mercy upon me.

Are there any of you here who have a faith in Christ which you are ashamed of? I also am ashamed of youand so, also, will Christ be ashamed of you when He comes in the glory of His Father and all His holy angels with Him! Ashamed to claim that you are honest? Then I think you must live in bad company, where to be a rogue is to be famous. And if you are ashamed to say, I love my Lord, I think you are courting the friendship of Christs enemies, and what can you be but an enemy yourself? If you love Him, say it! Put on your Masters regimentals! Enlist in His army and come forward and declare, As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Their faith was alike, then, in these four particularsit was fixed alone on Him. It was accompanied with a sense of unworthiness. It struggled and conquered opposition. And it openly declared itself before all comers.

By your patience I shall now try to show the differences between the same faith as to its manifestations. First, the womans faith acted like a womans faith. She showed tender love and the affections are the glory and the strength of women. They were certainly such in her. Her love was intense, womanly loveand she poured it out upon the Savior. The mans faith acted like a mans in its determination and strength. He persisted in crying, You Son of David. There was as much that was masculine about his faith as there was of the feminine in the penitents faithand everything should be in its order and after its season.

It would not have been meet for the womans voice to be heard so boldly above the crowd. It would have seemed out of place for a mans tears to have been falling upon the Saviors feet. Either one or the other might have been justifiable, but they would not have been equally suitable. But now they are as suitable as they are excellent. The woman acts as a godly woman should. The man like a godly man. Never let us measure ourselves by other people. Do not, my Brother, say, I could not shed tears. Who asked you to do so? A mans tears are mostly within and so let them be it is ours to use other modes of showing our love. And, my Sister, do not say, I could not act as a herald and publicly proclaim the King. I doubt not you could do so if there were need, but your tears in secret, and those wordless tokens of love to Jesus which you are rendering are not less acceptable because they are not the same as a man would give. No, they are

the better because they are more suitable to you. Do not think that all the flowers of Gods garden must bloom in the same color or shed the same perfume.

Notice, next, that the woman acted like a woman who had been a sinner. What more meet than tears? What fitter place for her than at the Saviors feet? She had been a sinnershe acts like a sinner. But the man who had been a beggar acted like a beggar. What does a beggar do but clamor for alms? Did he not beg gloriously? Never one plied the trade more earnestly than he! Son of David, he said, have mercy on me. I should not have liked to have seen the beggar sitting there weeping. Nor to have heard the penitent woman shouting! Neither would have been natural or seemly. Faith works according to the condition, circumstances, sex, or ability of the person in whom it livesit best shows itself in its own formnot in an artificial mannerbut in the natural outflow of the heart.

Observe, also, that the woman did not speak. There is something very beautiful in the golden silence of the woman which was richer than her silver speech would have been. But the man was not silent. He spoke. He spoke out and his words were excellent. I venture to say that the womans silence spoke as powerfully as the mans voice. Of the two I think I find more eloquence in the falling tears and unbraided hair wiping the Saviors feet than in the cry, Son of David, have mercy on me. Yet both forms of expression were equally good. The silence best in the woman with her tears and the speech best in the man with his confident trust in Christ.

Do not think it necessary, dear Friend, in order to serve, to do other peoples work. What your own hand finds to do, do it with all your might. If you think you can never honor Christ till you enter a pulpit, it may be just possible that you will afterwards honor Him best by getting out of it as quickly as you can! There have been persons well qualified to adorn the religion of Christ with a lap stone on their lap who have thought it necessary to mount a pulpitand in that position have been a hindrance to Christ and His Gospel. Sister, there is a sphere for you. Keep to it. Let none push you out of it. But do not think there is nothing else to do except the work which some other woman does. God has called her, let her follow Gods voiceHe calls you in another direction, follow His voice there. You will be most like that other excellent woman when you are most different from her. I mean, you will be most truly obedient to Christ, as she is, if you pursue quite another path.

There was a difference, again, in this. The woman gaveshe brought her ointment. The man did the oppositehe begged. There are various ways of showing love to Christ which are equally excellent tokens of faith. To give Him her ointment and give Him her tears, and give Him the accommodation of her hair was well. It showed her faith, which worked by love. To give nothing, for the beggar had nothing to give, but simply to honor Christ by appealing to His bounty and His royal power, was best in the beggar. I can commend neither above the other, for I doubt not that both the penitent and the beggar gave Christ their whole heartand what more does Jesus ask from anyone? The thoughts of the woman and the thoughts of the beggar were different, too. Her thoughts were mainly about the past and her sinstherefore her tears. To be forgiven, that was her point.

His thoughts were mainly about the present and did not so much concern his sin as his deficiency, infirmity and inabilityand so he came with different thoughts. I do not doubt that he thought of sin, as I dare say she, also, thought of infirmity. But in her case the thought of sin was uppermost and therefore the tears. In his the infirmity was uppermost and therefore the prayer, Lord, that I might receive my sight. Do not, then, compare your experience with that of another. God is a God of wonderful variety! The painter who repeats himself in many pictures has a scarcity of conception, but the master artist scarcely ever sketches the same thing a second time. There is a boundless variety in genius and God, who transcends all the genius of men, creates an infinite variety in the works of His Divine Grace. Look not, therefore, for likeness everywhere.

The woman, it is said, loved much, and she proved her love by her acts. But the man loved much, too, and showed his love by actions which were most admirable, for he followed Jesus in the way, glorifying God. Yet they were different actions. I do not find that he brought any box of ointment, or anointed Christs feet. Neither do I find that she literally followed Christ in the way, though no doubt she followed Him in spirit. Neither did she, with a loud voice, glorify God as the restored blind beggar did. There are differences of operation, but the same Lord. There are differences of capacity and differences of calling, but the same Lord. By this reflection I hope you will be enabled to deliver yourselves from the fault of judging one, by another, and that you will look for the same faithbut not for the same development of it.

So interesting is this subject that I want you to follow me while I very rapidly sketch the womans case and then the mans, not mentioning the differences, one by one, but allowing the two pictures to impress themselves separately upon your minds. Observe this woman. What a strange compound she was. She was consciously unworthy and therefore she wept, yet she drew very near to Jesus. Her acts were those of nearness and communionshe washed His feet with her tears, she wiped them with the hairs of her headand meanwhile she kissed them again and again. She has not ceased, said Christ, to kiss My feet.

A sense of unworthiness and the enjoyment of communion were mixed together! Oh, Divine faith which blends the two! She was shamefaced, yet was she very bold. She dared not look the Master in the face as yetshe approached Him from behind. Yet she dared face Simon and remain in his room, whether he frowned or not. I have known some who have blushed in the face of Christ who would not have blushed before a judge, nor at the stake, if they had been dragged there for Christs sake. Such a woman was Anne Askew, humble before her Master, but like a lioness before the foes of God! The penitent woman wept, she was a mourner, yet she had a deep joy. I know she had, for every kiss meant joy. Every time she lifted that blessed foot and kissed it, her heart leaped with the transport of love. Her heart knew bitterness for sin, but it also knew the sweetness of pardon. What a mixture! Faith made the compound. She was humble

never one more soyet see how she takes upon herself to deal with the King, Himself!

Brothers and Sisters, you and I are satisfied, and well we may be, if we may wash the saints feet, but she was not. Oh, the courage of this woman! She will pass through the outer court and get right to the Kings own Throneand there pay her homage, in her own personto His Person, and wash the feet of the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God! I know not that an angel ever performed such a service, and therefore this woman takes preeminence as having done for Jesus what no other being ever did! I have said that she was silent, and yet she spoke. I will add she was despised, but Christ set her high in honor and made Simon, who despised her, to feel little in her presence! I will also add she was a great sinner, but she was a great saint. Her great sinnership, when pardoned, became the raw stuff out of which great saints are made by the mighty power of God.

Finally she was saved by faith, so says the text, but if ever there was a case in which James could not have said, Shall faith save you? and in which He must have said, Here is one that shows her faith by her works, it was the case of this woman! There she is before you! Imitate her faith, itself, though you cannot actually copy her deeds! Now look at the man. He was blind, but he could see a great deal more than the Pharisees who said they could see. Blind, but his inward optics saw the King in His beautysaw the splendor of His Throneand he confessed it. He was a beggar, but he had a royal soul and a strong sovereign determination which was not to be put down. He had the kind of mind which dwells in men who are princes among their fellows!

He is not to be stopped by disciples, no, nor by Apostles! He has begun to pray and pray he will till he obtains the blessing he seeks! Note well that what he knew, he avowed. What he desired, he pleaded for. And what he needed he understood. Lord, that I might receive my sight. He was clear about his needs and clear about the only Person who could supply them. What he asked for he expected, for when he was bid to come he evidently expected that his sight would be restored, for we are told by another Evangelist that he cast away his beggars cloak! He felt he should never need to beg again! He was sure his eyes were about to be opened!

Lastly, what he received he was grateful for, for as soon as he could walk without a guide he took Christ to be His guide and followed Him in the way, glorifying Him. Look on both pictures. May you have the shadows and the lights of both, as far as they would tend to make you, also, another and distinct picture by the same Artist, whose hand, alone, can produce such wonders.

III. WHAT DOES THIS TEACH US IN REFERENCE TO FAITH? It teaches us, first, that faith is all important. Do, I pray you, my Hearers, see whether you have the precious faith, the faith of Gods elect! Remember there are not many things in Scripture called precious There is the precious blood and there goes with it the precious faith. If you have not that, you are lost! If you have not that, you are neither fit to live nor fit to die! If you have not that, your eternal destiny will be infinite despair! But if you have faith, though it is as a grain of mustard seed, you are saved. Your faith has saved you.

Learn, next, that the main matter in faith is the person whom you believe. I do not say in whom you believe. That would be true, but not quite so scriptural an expression. Paul does not say, as I hear most people quote it, I know in whom I have believed. Faith believes Christ. Your faith must recognize Him as a Person and come to Him as a Person, not resting merely in His teaching, or only His work, but in Him. Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. A personal Savior for sinners! Are you resting on Him alone? Do you believe Him? You know the safety of the building depends mainly upon the foundation, and if the foundation is not right, you may build as you will, it will not last. Do you build, then, on Christ, alone? Inquire about that as a special point.

Observe, next, that we must not expect exactly the same manifestation in each convert. Let not the elders of the Church expect it. Let not parents require it from their children. Let not anxious friends look for it. Do not expect it in yourself. Biographies are very useful, but they may become a snare. I must not judge that I am not a child of God because I am not precisely like that good man whose life I have just been reading. Am I resting on Christ? Do I believe Him? Then it may be the Lords Grace is striking out in quite a different path for me than that which has been trod by my brother. It may illustrate other phases of its power and show to principalities and powers the exceeding riches of Divine love.

IV. And, lastly, the matter which sums up all is thisif we have faith in Jesus we are saved and ought not to talk or act as if there were any question about it! YOUR FAITH HAS SAVED YOU. Jesus says it. Granted, you have faith in Christ and it is certain that faith has saved you. Do not, therefore, go on talking and acting and feeling as if you were not saved. I know a company of saved people who say every Sunday, Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners. But they are not miserable sinners if they are saved! For them to use such words is to throw a slight upon the salvation which Christ has given them. If they are saved sinners, they ought to be rejoicing saints!

What some say others do not say, but they act as if it were so. They go about asking God to give them the mercy they have already obtained, hoping one day to receive what Christ assures them is already in their possession, talking to others as if it were a matter of question whether they were saved or not, when it cannot be a matter of question. Your faith has saved you. Fancy the poor penitent woman turning round and saying to the Savior, Lord, I humbly hope that it is true. There would have been neither humility nor faith in such an expression! Imagine that blind man, when Christ said, Your faith has saved you, saying, I trust that in future years it will be found to be so. It would be a belying at once of his own earnest character and of Christs honesty of speech! If you have believed, you are saved! Do not talk as if you were not, but now, take your harp down from the willows and sing unto the Lord a new song!

I have noticed in many prayers a tendency to avoid speaking as if facts were facts. I have heard this kind of expression, The Lord has done great things for us, therefore we desire to be glad. The text is, The Lord has done great things for us, therefore we are glad. And if the Lord has done these great things for us, our right is to be glad about them, not to go with an infamous, if, upon our lips before the Lord who cannot lie! If you are dealing with your fellow creatures, suspect them, for they mostly deserve it. If you are listening to their promises, doubt them, for their promises go to be broken. But if you are dealing with your Lord and Master, never suspect Him, for He is beyond suspicion! Never doubt His promises, for Heaven and earth and Hell shall pass away, but not one jot or little of His Word shall fail!

I claim for Christ that you cast away forever all the talk which is made up of, buts, and, ifs, and perhaps, and, I hope, and, I trust. You are in the Presence of One who said. Verily, verily, and meant what He said! He is the Amen, the faithful and true Witness. You would not spit in His face if He were here, yet your, ifs, and, buts, are so much insult cast upon His Truth! You would not scourge Him, but what do your doubts do but vex Him and put Him to shame? If He lies, never believe Him! If He speaks the truth, never doubt Him! Then shall you know, when you have cast aside your wicked unbelief, that your faith has saved you, and you will go in peace!

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON Luke 7:36-50; 18:35-43.**   
HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK 18 (VER. I), 536, 586.

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THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER   
NO. 308

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 15, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

**And when much people were gathered together and were come to Him out of every city, He   
spoke by a parable. A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the   
wayside; and it was trod down and the fowls of**

**the air devoured it. And some fell upon   
a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it   
withered away, because it lacked   
moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it   
and choked it. And other fell on good ground   
and sprang up and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when He had said these things,**

**He cried, He that has ears to hear, let him hear. Luke 8:4-8.**

IN OUR country, when a sower goes forth to his work, he generally enters into an enclosed field and scatters the seed from his basket along every ridge and furrow. But in the East, the corn-growing country, hard by a small town, is usually an open area. It is divided into different properties, but there are no visible divisions, except the ancient landmarks, or perhaps ridges of stones. Through these open lands there are footpaths, the most frequented being called the highways. You must not imagine these highways to be like our paved roads. They are merely paths, trod tolerably hard. Here and there you notice byways, along which travelers who wish to avoid the public road may journey with a little more safety when the main road is infested with robbershasty travelers also strike out short cuts for themselves and so open fresh tracks for others.

When the sower goes forth to sow he finds a plot of ground scratched over with the primitive Eastern plow. He aims at scattering his seed there most plentifully. But a path runs through the center of his field and unless he is willing to leave a broad headland, he must throw a handful upon it. Yonder, a rock crops out in the midst of the plowed land and the seed falls on its shallow soil. Here is a corner full of the roots of nettles and thistles and he flings a little here. The corn and the nettles come up together and the thorns, being the stronger, soon choke the seed, so that it brings forth no fruit unto perfection. Remember that the Bible was written in the East and when its metaphors and allusions have been explained according to Eastern customs, it often helps us to understand a passage far better than if we think of English customs.

The preacher of the Gospel is like the sower. He does not make his seedit is given him by his Divine Master. No man could create the smallest grain that ever grew upon the earth, much less the celestial seed of eternal life. The minister goes to his Master in secret and asks Him to teach him His Gospel and thus he fills his basket with the good seed of the kingdom. He then goes forth in his Masters name and scatters precious Truths of God. If he knew where the best soil was to be found, perhaps he might limit himself to that which had been prepared by the plow of conviction. But not knowing mens hearts, it is his business to preach the Gospel to every creatureto throw a handful on the hardened heart and another on the mind which is overgrown with the cares and pleasures of the world. He has to leave the seed in the care of the Lord who gave it to him, for he is not responsible for the harvest, he is only accountable for the care and industry with which he does his work.

If no single ear should ever make glad the reaper, the sower will be rewarded by His Master if he has planted the right seed with careful hand. If it were not for this fact with what despairing agony should we utter the cry of Isaiah, Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Our duty is not measured by the character of our hearers, but by the command of our God. We are bound to preach the Gospel, whether men will hear, or whether they will nt. It is ours to sow beside all waters. Let mens hearts be what they may, the minister must preach the Gospel to them. He must sow the seed on the rock as well as in the furrow, on the highway as well as in the plowed field.

I shall now address myself to the four classes of hearers mentioned in our Lords parable. We have, first of all, those who are represented by the wayside, those who are hearers only. Then those represented by the stony groundthese are transiently impressed, but the Word produces no lasting fruit. Then, those among thorns, on whom a good impression is produced, but the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches and the pleasures of the world choke the seed. And lastly, that small classGod be pleased to multiply it exceedinglythat small class of good-ground hearers, in whom the Word brings forth abundant fruit.

I. First of all, I address myself to those hearts which are like the WAYSIDESome fell by the wayside. And it was trod down and the fowls of the air devoured it. Many of you do not go to the place of worship desiring a blessing. You do not intend to worship God, or to be affected by anything that you hear. You are like the highway which was never intended to be a cornfield. If a single grain of the Truth of God should fall into your heart and grow, it would be as great a wonder as for corn to grow up in the street. If the seed shall be dexterously scattered, some of it will fall upon you and rest for a while upon your thoughts. Tis true you will not understand it. But, nevertheless, if it be placed before you in an interesting style, you will talk about it till some more congenial entertainment shall attract you.

Even this slender benefit is brief, for in a little season you will forget all that you have heard. Would to God we could hope that our words would tarry with you, but we cannot hope it, for the soil of your heart is so beaten by continual traffic that there is no hope of the seed finding a living root-hold. Satan is constantly passing over your heart with his company of blasphemies, lusts, lies and vanities. The chariots of pride roll along it and the feet of greedy mammon tread it till it is hard as adamant. Alas, for the good seedit finds not a moments respitecrowds pass and pass again.

In fact, your soul is an exchange, across which continually hurry the busy feet of those who make merchandise of the souls of men. You are buying and selling, but you little think that you are selling the Truth of God and that you are buying your souls destruction. You have no time, you say, to think of religion. No, the road of your heart is such a crowded thoroughfare that there is no room for the wheat to spring up. If it did begin to germinate, some rough foot would crush the green blade before it could come to perfection. The seed has occasionally lain long enough to begin to sprout, but just then a new place of amusement has been opened and you have entered there and as with an iron heel, the germ of life that was in the seed was crushed out. Corn could not grow in Cornhill or Cheapside, however excellent the seed might beyour heart is just like those crowded thoroughfaresso many cares and sins throng it and so many proud, vain, evil, rebellious thoughts against God pass through it, that the seed of the Truth of God cannot grow.

We have looked at this hard roadside, let us now describe what becomes of the good Word, when it falls upon such a heart. It would have grown if it had fallen on right soil, but it has dropped into the wrong place and it remains as dry as when it fell from the sowers hand. The Word of the Gospel lies upon the surface of such a heart, but never enters it. Like the snow, which sometimes falls upon our streetsupon the wet pavement, melts and is gone at onceso is it with this man. The Word has not time to quicken in his soulit lies there an instant, but it never strikes root, or takes the slightest effect.

Why do men come to hear if the Word never enters their hearts? That has often puzzled us. Some hearers would not be absent on the Sunday on any account. They are delighted to come up with us to worship, but

yet the tear never trickles down their cheek, their soul never mounts up to Heaven on the wings of praise, nor do they truly join in our confessions of sin. They do not think of the wrath to come, nor of the future state of their souls. Their heart is as iron. The minister might as well speak to a heap of stones as preach to them. What brings these senseless sinners here? Surely we are as hopeful of converting lions and leopards as these untamed, insensible hearts.

Oh feeling! You are fled to brutish beasts and men have lost their reason! Do these people come to our assemblies because it is respectable to attend a place of worship? Or is it that their coming helps to make them comfortable in their sins? If they stopped coming, conscience would prick them. But they come here that they may flatter themselves with the notion that they are religious. Oh, my Hearers, your case is one that might make an angel weep! How sad to have the sun of the Gospel shining on your faces and yet to have blind eyes that never see the light. The music of Heaven is lost upon you, for you have no ears to hear. You can catch the turn of a phrase, you can appreciate the poetry of an illustration, but the hidden meaningthe Divine lifeyou do not perceive.

You sit at the marriage feast, but you eat not of the dainties. The bells of Heaven ring with joy over ransomed spirits, but you live unransomed, without God and without Christ. Though we plead with you and pray for you and weep over you, you still remain as hardened, as careless and as thoughtless as ever you were. May God have mercy on you and break up your hard hearts, that His Word may abide in you. We have not, however, completed the picture. The passage tells us that the fowls of the air devoured the seed. Is there here a wayside hearer? Perhaps he did not mean to hear this sermon and when he has heard it he will be asked by one of the wicked to come into company. He will go with the tempter and the good seed will be devoured by the fowls of the air. Plenty of evil ones are ready to take away the Gospel from the heart. The devil himself, that prince of the air, is eager at any time to snatch away a good thought.

And then the devil is not alonehe has legions of helpers. He can set a mans wife, children, friends, enemies, customers, or creditors, to eat up the good seed and they will do it effectually. Oh, sorrow upon sorrow, that heavenly seed should become devils meat! That Gods corn should feed foul birds! O my Hearers, if you have heard the Gospel from your youth, what wagonloads of sermons have been wasted on you! In your younger days, you heard old Dr. So-and-So and the dear old man was accustomed to pray for his hearers till his eyes were red with tears! Do you remember those many Sundays when you said to yourself, Let me go to my chamber and fall on my knees and pray? But you did notthe fowls of the air ate up the seed and you went on to sin as you had sinned before.

Since then, by some strange impulse, you are very rarely absent from Gods House. But now the seed of the Gospel falls into your soul as if it dropped upon an iron floor and nothing comes of it. The Law may be thundered at you. You do not sneer at it, but it never affects you. Jesus Christ may be lifted up. His dear wounds may be exhibited. His streaming blood may flow before your very eyes and you may be bid with all earnestness to look to Him and live. But it is as if one should sow the seashore. What shall I do for you? Shall I stand here and rain tears upon this hard highway? Alas, my tears will not break it up. It is trod too hard for that. Shall I bring the Gospel plow? Alas, the plowshare will not enter ground so solid. What shall we do? O God, You know how to melt the hardest heart with the precious blood of Jesus. Do it now, we beseech You, and thus magnify Your Grace, by causing the good seed to live and to produce a heavenly harvest.

II. I shall now turn to the second class of hearersAnd some fell upon a ROCK. And as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. You can easily picture to yourselves that piece of rock in the midst of the field thinly veiled with soil. And of course the seed falls there as it does everywhere else. It springs up, it hastens to grow, it withers, it dies. None but those who love the souls of men can tell what hopes, what joys and what bitter disappointments these stony places have caused us. We have a class of hearers whose hearts are hard and yet they are apparently the softest and most impressible of men.

While other men see nothing in the sermon, these men weep. Whether you preach the terrors of the Law or the love of Calvary, they are alike stirred in their souls and the liveliest impressions are apparently produced. Such may be listening now. They have resolved, but they have procrastinated. They are not the sturdy enemies of God who clothe themselves in steel, but they seem to bare their breasts and lay them open to the minister. Rejoiced in heart, we shoot our arrows there and they appear to penetrate. But, alas, a secret armor blunts every dart and no wound is felt.

The parable speaks of this character thusSome fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. Or as another passage explains itAnd these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the Word, immediately receive it with gladness. And have no root in themselves and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution arises for the Words sake, immediately they are offended. Have we not thousands of hearers who receive the word with joy? They have no deep convictions, but they leap into Christ on a sudden and profess an instantaneous faith in Him and that faith has all the appearance of being genuine.

When we look at it, the seed has really sprouted. There is a kind of life in it, there is apparently a green blade. We thank God that a sinner is brought back, a soul is born to God. But our joy is prematurethey sprang up on a sudden and received the Word with joy, because they had no depth of earth and the same cause which hastened their reception of the seed also causes them, when the sun is risen with his fervent heat, to wither away. These men we see every day in the week. They come to join the Church. They tell us a story of how they heard us preach on suchand-such an occasion and, oh, the Word was so blessed to them, they never felt so happy in their lives! Oh Sir, I thought I must leap from my seat when I heard about a precious Christ and I believed on Him there and then. I am sure I did.

We question them as to whether they were ever convicted of sin. They think they were. But one thing they know, they feel a great pleasure in religion. We put it to them, Do you think you will hold on? They are confident that they shall. They hate the things they once loved, they are sure they do. Everything has become new to them. And all this is on a sudden. We enquire when the good work began. We find it began when it ended, that is to say, there was no previous work, no plowing of the soil, but on a sudden they sprang from death to life, as if a field should be covered with wheat by magic.

Perhaps we receive them into the Church. In a week or two they are not so regular as they used to be. We gently reprove them and they explain that they meet with such opposition in religion, that they are obliged to yield a little. Another month and we lose them altogether. The reason is that they have been laughed at or exposed to a little opposition and they have gone back. And what do you think are the feelings of the minister? He is like the husbandman, who sees his field all green and flourishing, but at night a frost nips every shoot and his hoped-for gains are gone. The minister goes to his chamber and casts himself on his face before God and cries, I have been deceived. My converts are fickle, their religion has withered as the green herb.

In the ancient story Orpheus is said to have had such skill upon the lyre that he made the oaks and stones to dance around him. It is a poetical fiction and yet has it sometimes happened to the minister, that not only have the godly rejoiced, but men, like oaks and stones, have danced from their places. Alas, they have been oaks and stones still. Hushed is the lyre. The oak returns to its rooting-place and the stone casts itself heavily to the earth. The sinner, who, like Saul, was among the Prophets, goes back to plan mischief against the Most High. If it is bad to be a wayside hearer, I cannot think it is much better to be like the rock.

This second class of hearers certainly gives us more joy than the first. A certain company always comes round a new minister. And I have often thought it is an act of Gods kindness that He allows these people to gather at the first, while the minister is young and has but few to stand by himthese persons are easily moved and if the minister preaches earnestly they feel it and they love him and rally round him, much to his comfort. But time, that proves all things, proves them, too. They seemed to be made of true metal. But when they are put into the fire to be tested, they are consumed in the furnace. Some of the shallow kind are here now. I have looked at you when I have been preaching and I have often thought, That man one of these days will come out from the world, I am sure he will. I have thanked God for him.

Alas, he is the same as ever. Years and years have we sowed him in vain and it is to be feared it will be so to the end, for he is without depth and without the moisture of the Spirit. Shall it be so? Must I stand over the mouth of your open sepulcher and think, Here lies a shoot which never became an ear, a man in whom grace struggled but never reigned, who gave some hopeful spasms of life and then subsided into eternal death? God save you! Oh, May the Spirit deal with you effectually and may you, even you, yet bring forth fruit unto God, that Jesus may have a reward for His sufferings.

III. I shall briefly treat of the third class and may the Spirit of God assist me to deal faithfully with you. And some fell among THORNS. And the thorns sprang up with it and choked it.

Now, this was good soil. The two first characters were badthe wayside was not the proper place, the rock was not a congenial situation for the growth of any plant. But this is good soil, for it grows thorns. Wherever a thistle will spring up and flourish, there would wheat flourish too. This was fat, fertile soil. It was no marvel, therefore, that the husbandman dealt largely there and threw handful after handful upon that corner of the field. See how happy he is when in a month or two he visits the spot. The seed has sprung up. True, theres a suspicious little plant down there of about the same size as the wheat. Oh, he thinks, thats not much, the corn will outgrow that. When it is stronger it will choke these few thistles that have unfortunately mixed with it.

Mr. Husbandman, you do not understand the force of evil, or you would not thus dream! He comes again and the seed has grown, there is even the corn in the ear. But the thistles, the thorns and the briars have become twisted with one another and the poor wheat can hardly get a ray of sunshine. It is so choked with thorns every way, that it looks quite yellowthe plant is starved. Still it perseveres in growing and it does seem

as if it would bring forth a little fruit. Alas, it never comes to anything. With it the reaper never fills his arm. We have this class very largely among us. These hear the word and understand what they hear. They take the Truth of God home. They think it over. They even go the length of making a profession of religion. The wheat seems to spring and ear. It will soon come to perfection.

Be in no hurry, these men and women have a great deal to see after. They have the cares of a large concerntheir establishment employs so many hundred hands. Do not be deceived as to their godlinessthey have no time for it. They will tell you that they must live. That they cannot neglect this world. That they must anyhow look out for the present and as for the future, they will render it all due attention by-and-by. They continue to attend Gospel-preaching and the poor little stunted blade of religion keeps on growing after a fashion. Meanwhile they have grown rich, they come to the place of worship in a carriage, they have all that heart can wish. Ah, now the seed will grow, will it not? No, no. They have no cares now. The shop is given up, they live in the country. They have not to ask, Where shall the money come from to meet the next bill? or how shall they be able to provide for an increasing family.

Now they have too much, instead of too little, for they have riches and they are too wealthy to be gracious. But, says one, they might spend their riches for God. Certainly they might, but they do not, for riches are deceitful. They have to entertain much company and chime in with the world and so Christ and His Church are left in the lurch. Yes, but they begin to spend their riches and they have surely got over that difficulty, for they give largely to the cause of Christ and they are munificent in charity. The little blade will grow, will it not? No, for now behold the thorns of pleasure. Their liberality to others involves liberality to themselves. Their pleasures, amusements and vanities choke the wheat of true religionthe good grains of Gospel Truth cannot grow because they have to attend that musical party, that ball, and that evening party and so they cannot think of the things of God.

I know several specimens of this class. I knew one, high in court circles, who has confessed to me that he wished he were poor, for then he might enter the kingdom of Heaven. He has said to me, Ah, Sir, these politics, these politics, I wish I were rid of them, they are eating the life out of my heart. I cannot serve God as I would. I know of another, overloaded with riches, who has said to me, Ah, Sir, it is an awful thing to be rich. One cannot keep close to the Savior with all this earth about him. Ah, my dear Hearers, I will not ask for you that God may lay you on a bed of sickness, that He may strip you of all your wealth and bring you to beggary. But, oh, if He were to do it and you were to save your souls, it would be the best bargain you could ever make! If those mighty ones, who now complain that the thorns choke the seed, could give up all their riches and pleasuresif they that fare sumptuously every day could take the place of Lazarus at the gateit were a happy change for them if their souls might be saved.

A man may be honorable and rich and yet go to Heaven. But it will be hard work, for, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven. God does make some rich men enter the kingdom of Heaven, but hard is their struggle. Steady, young man, steady! Hurry not to climb to wealth! It is a place where many heads are turned. Do not ask God to make you popular. They that have popularity are wearied by it. Cry with AgurGive me neither poverty nor riches. God give me to tread the golden mean and may I ever have in my heart that good seed, which shall bring forth fruit a hundredfold to His own glory.

IV. I now close with the last character, namely, the GOOD GROUND. Of the good soil, as you will mark, we have but one in four. Will one in four of our hearers, with well-prepared hearts, receive the Word? The ground is described as goodnot that it was good by nature, but it had been made good by Grace. God had plowed it. He had stirred it up with the plow of conviction and there it lay in ridge and furrow as it should lie. When the Gospel was preached, the heart received it, for the man said, That is just the blessing I want. Mercy is what a needy sinner requires. So that the preaching of the Gospel was THE thing to give comfort to this disturbed and plowed soil. Down fell the seed to take good root.

In some cases it produced fervency of love, largeness of heart, devotedness of purpose of a noble kind, like seed which produces a hundredfold. The man became a mighty servant for God, he spent himself and was spent. He took his place in the vanguard of Christs army, stood in the hottest of the battle and did deeds of daring which few could accomplish the seed produced a hundredfold. It fell into another heart of like characterthe man could not do as much, but still he did much. He gave himself to God and in his business he had a word to say for his Lord. In his daily walk he quietly adorned the doctrine of God his Saviorhe brought forth sixty-fold.

Then it fell on another, whose abilities and talents were but small. He could not be a star, but he would be a glowworm. He could not do as the greatest, but he was content to do something, however humble. The seed had brought forth in him tenfold, perhaps twenty-fold. How many are there of this sort here? Is there one who prays within himself, God be merciful to me a sinner? The seed has fallen in the right spot. Soul, your prayer shall be heard. God never sets a man longing for mercy without

intending to give it.   
Does another whisper, Oh that I might be saved? Believe on the Lord   
Jesus Christ and you, even you, shall be saved. Have you been the chief of  
sinners? Trust Christ and your enormous sins shall vanish as the millstone sinks beneath the flood. Is there not one here that will trust the   
Savior? Can it be possible that the Spirit is entirely absentthat He is not  
moving in one soulnot begetting life in one spirit? We will pray that He   
may now descend, that the Word may not be in vain.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2843 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE SEED BY THE WAYSIDE   
NO. 2843

A SERMON   
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, AUGUST 9, 1903.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1888.

**As he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.   
Luke 8:5.**

THIS parable is recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is a very important one and, therefore, it is very carefully preserved for us. Matthew puts it, When he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came, and devoured them up.

Notice that the sower is always spoken of as a solitary man. In the harvest field, there is a great company and they sing and shout together in harmony, but the sower goes forth alone. Our Savior was the great SowerTHE SOWER went forth to sow, unaccompanied. He pursued His solitary way and all day long He continued His personal task. For that reason, I feel that when we come together in large numbers, the majority of us, I hope, being earnest sowers of the Good Seed of the Kingdom, we help to cheer each other up, for, to a large extent, we have to work alone. I have, thank God, many helpers, but there are certain parts of this work in which I feel an almost unbearable solitude. I suppose that you who are engaged in your own spheres of service often derive much comfort from Christian communion, but there must be some parts of your work in which you have to act by yourselvesto labor alone and to wait upon God alone. I think that this experience is good for us. I do not believe that it is good for us to be continually leaning upon one another, like those houses of which so many are being run up nowadays. If you took the end one away, they would all fall down! We want to be selfcontainednot merely semi-detached, but altogether detachedso as to be able to stand by ourselves upon our own foundation. God sometimes takes away a helper from us in order that we may learn to lean upon Him, only, and to go about our service in entire dependence upon the Master who is to derive Glory not only from the result of the service, but from the service itself.

It may do us good to talk a little while about our failures. I suppose that we have all had a good many. When some of you began your work for God, you thought that you were going to push the world before you and to drag the Church behind youbut you have not done it yet. You fancied that you were going to convert everybody by your preaching, but, like Melancthon, you have had to say, Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon. And you have been driven closer to God by the very failures which you have experienced. If the Holy Spirit shall graciously help us, we may both glorify God and comfort one another while we meditate upon one set of failures with which we are constantly meeting, that is, those that are set forth in these words, As he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

So, first, we learn that we shall have some unprofitable labors. Secondly, we shall find that some soils will remain unsuitable for the Good Seed. And, thirdly, we shall have to watch that seed, that we may learn something from what happens to it.

I. First, then, WE SHALL MOST CERTAINLY HAVE SOME UNPROFITABLE LABORS, something to sigh over, something that will drive us to cry, with Isaiah, Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

We may expect this, first, because it is so in everything else. There is not a tradesman here who makes a profit on everything. There never was a merchant who was successful in every transaction. There are losses in the most gainful trade. Look at the fishermandoes he catch fish every time he casts his net? I have stood, many times, on the sea shore at Mentone and seen from a dozen to 20 men pull in a net which had encompassed many acres of seaand when they had pulled it in, I could hold in my hand all that they had caught! And I have seen them go out again almost directly after, and come in again with as little as before! But they still kept on their task even though, often and often, the tiniest plate would hold all that they took. Fishermen do not give up their work because they have some failures in their fishingand if we take the figure which our Lord used, that of the farmer, we find that all crops do not succeed. The farmer, after some years of experience, at any rate, does not expect that every seed will come up and that every crop will be, alike, bountiful. If he did, he would be sorely disappointed! He learns at last to set the gain over against the loss, to set the success over against the failure and so he perseveres and has patience, expecting and believing that, in the long run, he will be a gainer. So, dear Christian Friend, whatever is your sphere of service, I would lead you to expect that there will be some unprofitable parts of the field because it is so in everything else and the analogies of Nature generally hold good in the sphere of Grace.

Do you not think, in the next place, that our disappointments and our unprofitable labors teach us our dependence upon God? Perhaps we are not yet able to bear a very large measure of success. If the Lord blesses some Brothers a little, and they see a few souls brought to Christ, they are not only very grateful and very happy, which is quite right, but they are very great in their own esteem, which is quite wrong! You should hear them at night after a successful meetingyou would hardly know them! God has given them a puff of wind in their sail and they are almost blown over, for they have so little ballast. There are some of us workers for God whom He cannot trust with successthat is one reason for our failures, for our Master means to make more use of us, by-and-by. It does not yet appear what we shall be and He is humbling us that we may be fitted to bear the exceeding weight of happiness which He means to lay upon us when, in later years, He makes us bring forth abundantly to His praise and Glory.

O workers, mind that you are fit to be blessed by God! Do pray that you may be in such a state of spiritual health that it may be safe for your Heavenly Father to indulge you with very much success! I think that whenever we have been trying hard for the conversion of any person and we have not succeeded in it, it drives us to our knees. You must have met with some who have greatly disappointed you. You thought that you had that fish, but it has slipped away from you and gone back into the river or sea again. You supposed that that woman was really converted. What a sincere penitent she seemed to be! But she has gone back to her old sins and is as evil as ever. You thought that that man was really a most striking instance of Divine Grace, but you are ashamed of him now, for he is doing harm to others who think that there is nothing in religion when they see what a false profession he has made. Ah, some of you do not know the heartbreak which we who have to deal with many souls, have to endure, but, in your smaller sphere, you must often have had to go to God with tears wetting your cheeks because, after all, you have not won that boy for Christ, or you cannot induce that giddy girl to seek the Savior.

You have wept and you have prayed, and yet, for all that, there is some of the wayside still in front of you, and it seems as if it never can and never will yield any harvest to your sowing! We do not like wasting our breath. We do not like, above all, seeming to waste our breath in prayerand I do not believe that we really do so. I believe that it all turns in some way to Gods Glory, but yet it does so happen that, by our failures, we are driven to feel our entire dependence upon our God. We are emptied of our self-sufficiency and made to know that we can no more convert a soul than we can make a world! Any man who thinks that he can create a new heart in any other person, had better begin by creating a fly. When he has done that, then let him think that he can make a sinful man to be a new creature in Christ Jesus! Go and raise the dead, if you can. Speak to those who lie in our cemeteries and cause them to live againand then imagine that you have within you the power to call a dead soul to spiritual life! This is the work of God alone! Gods arm must be made bare before this miracle can be workedand our failures teach us our absolute dependence upon Him.

This process is necessary, also, in order to get at the good soil. We must sometimes have to deal with persons who derive no benefit from us for the sake of others connected with them. The sower does not want to cast his seed upon the path that runs through the middle of the field. It is so hard that he knows that whatever falls upon it will be lost. But, then, he does want to sow right up to the edge of it. He does not want to leave a long strip on each side of the path without any wheat. His endeavor is, while he does not waste more than he can help upon the path, yet to sow right along by the edge of it that he may have a harvest close up to the barren pathway. It cannot be helped, in the nature of things, that some grains of wheat must fall upon the trodden path. So, if you want to be the means of blessing to a mans wife, it may be that you will have to try to win her husband, also, although he will never be won to Christ. If it is your anxious desire that all the children in a certain house should be converted to God and all the family should come to hear the Word, it may be that one member of the family will never receive the blessing. Do not begin asking any questions about that matteryour business is to preach to them all, to preach the Gospel to every creatureand if there should be some who prove to be like the trodden pathway to the Good Seed, effectually resisting the Gospel, it is necessary that they should be in the audience, for, if they did not come, it is probable that somebody else, whom God means to bless, would not be there.

Further, consider that this scattering of the Seed on the trodden road is necessary to the testing of the soil. I believe that we would do a deal of mischief by keeping on sorting out certain characters in preaching the Gospel, for it would drive people to think of themselves rather than of the Gospel. If I were to come here and say, Now if you are so-and-so, and so-and-so, then you may come to Christ and be savedthe first thought in each of my hearers minds would be, Am I this, or am I that? I do not want you to think in any such fashion as thatthe main thing is to take you off from all thought of self, that you may think only of Christ and His all-sufficiency. Are you a creature? We are bid to preach the Gospel to every creature. Are you a sinner? Then, it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. So, if we are to preach in this wholesale style, we must throw some handfuls of Seed where they will never spring up! But our great Lord has so much Good Seed, He is so rich a Farmer that He will not miss those handfuls that seem to be lostand we have a far easier task to bear our failures and mourn over them, than if we had to be weighted with the responsibility of picking out our hearers and saying, This one may have the Gospel, and that other one may not. That would be, indeed, a heavier burden than we could bear!

I remember Rowland Hills reply, when somebody said that he ought to preach only to the elect. Very well, he said, next Sunday morning, chalk them all on the back and when you have done that, I will preach to them. But the chalking of them on the back is the difficultywe cannot do that and, as we cannot do that, the best way is for us to leave our God to carry out the purposes of His distinguishing Grace in His own effectual way and not attempt to do what we certainly can never accomplish! There, scatter a handful of Seed by the wayside. Even if the birds of the air devour it, there is plenty more where that came from and it would be a pity for us to leave any portion unsown because we were miserly and stingy with our Masters Seed!

Once more, I am sure that when we do meet with failures, as we all do, this makes us the more grateful when we see the Seed spring up anywhere. I could not help blessing God, in the Prayer Meeting before this service, for any soul that had ever found the Savior under my ministry. It always seems to stagger me how God can bless one who is so feeble and I think that it must often surprise you, my dear Friends, when you find that God has really brought a sinner to Jesus feet through your instrumentality. When we remember the feebleness of our testimony and our frequent lack of faith in God. When we recollect how often we go home groaning because we cannot preach as we would like to preach and, I suppose I may say of you teachers, because you cannot teach as you would like to teachthen we can say, Blessed be God, ten thousand times, if but one poor servant girl has found the way to Heaven through me. If one poor Arab of the street should find Christ at the raggedschool, if there were only one as the result of a life of service, it would well repay you! Do not feel that because you seem to have no influence upon some people, the edge of the chisel is taken offthe material upon which you are working is so hard that you cannot make any impression upon it. When the Lord gives you another piece of wood that He has softened, you may work away at that and then you will be able to say, Blessed be His name I do not have all the difficult side of the work, but I do have to sow in some honest and good soil, which brings forth its hundredfold as my reward.

II. But, secondly, it is certainly true that we shall find SOME SOULS WHICH, for the present, at any rate, SEEM UNSUITED TO THE GOSPEL.   
This trodden track, through the field, was not a fit place for the seed to fall with any hope of a harvest following. Roadways, which have been long used, become very bad for sowing. I remember paying a visit to the old city of Silchester which still remains in England. Few ever seem to see it, but it is well worth seeing, though nothing remains but the walls. I went down to examine it and, standing on the wall, I could distinctly trace the streets of that old city, yet the whole of it was covered with wheat, but it would not come to perfection, or grow to any great length of straw where the old Roman roads had been. Near Croydon I have frequently traced the old Roman road through a field of grass or of wheat, by the fact that it was so well made that after the English plowing of centuries, it still seems difficult to raise good crops upon the ground. And those Oriental paths, though not made with all the skill of the Roman road makers, became very hard through being traversed by multitudes of feet.   
In a similar manner, there are many persons into whom we cannot get the Gospel because they are too much occupied. There is too much traffic over them. They are not occupied with deep thought but with multitudes of frivolous thoughts which are well imaged by travelers who just pass continually along a road. Have we not many in our congregations who are always occupied with worldly thoughts? From the moment they are up till they go to bed, it is just one continuous tramp of the world! They are trodden with the multitudinous feet of worldly business.   
Then, along a public road, you not only have business men, but you have persons bent on pleasure. How many young people there are whose hearts are just a road along which thoughts of levity and desires for amusement are continually going! How many precious hours are wasted over the novels of the day! I think that one of the worst enemies of the Gospel of Christ, at the present time, is to be found in the fiction of the day. People get these worthless books and sit, and sitforgetful of the duties of this world and of all that relates to the world to comejust losing themselves in the story of the hero or heroine. I have seen them shedding tears over things that never happened, as if there were not enough real sorrows in the world for us to grieve over! So these feet of fictitious personages, these feet of foolish frivolities, these feet of mere nonsense, or worse, keep traversing the hearts of men and making them hard so that the Gospel cannot enter.   
I believe, too, that some are made hard even by hearing the Gospel. You can hear too much if you do not hear aright. One nail can drive another out. If one sermon were put into practice, it would be better than 50 that went in one ear and out the other. Some are always greedy to hear the last new orator who has been discovered. They will go all over London to listen to him. That is only another kind of traffic constantly going over the road and making it as hard as if it were traversed for unholy purposes.   
Again, this was bad and unsuitable soil because it was hardened by the constant traffic. Sin hardens the heart. Every sin makes room for another sin and it is always easier to sin again after you have sinned once. No, moreI might even say that it becomes almost inevitable that you will sin again after you have sinned once. Sin hardens the mind so that it does not receive the Gospel.

And the world has a hardening effect, too. Association with its society, yielding to its customs, being engrossed in its business, all this makes a mans heart exceedingly hard. I have already reminded you that, alas, even the Gospel, itself, may harden sinners in their sin. After long hearing it, neglecting it, rejecting it, it seems to operate upon them in a very terrible way so that it becomes a savor of death unto death to them. Sad to relate, they are not alarmed by the fatal lethargy which has crept over them even while hearing the Word! And if they hear error, it has the same effect in a more dreadful way. Much of the preaching of the present day tends to harden the hearts of men against the Gospel. They are excused in their sins, taught to question the Inspiration of the Scriptures, led to doubt whether, after all, sin will bring the eternal punishment which our Lord Jesus plainly revealed! Oh, it is a sad, sad thing when all this traffic of things good, bad and indifferent has gone over a mans soul till it becomes harder than the nether millstone!   
One other reason why this soil was so uncongenial was that it was totally unprepared for the seed. There had been no plowing before the seed was sown, and no harrowing afterwards. He that sows without a plow may reap without a sickle. He who preaches the Gospel without preaching the Law of God may hold all the results of it in his hand and there will be little for him to hold. Robbie Flockhart, when he preached in the streets of Edinburgh, used to sayYou must preach the Law, for the Gospel is a silken thread and you cannot get it into the hearts of men unless you have made a way for it with a sharp needlethe sharp needle of the Law will pull the silken thread of the Gospel after it. There must be plowing before there is sowing if there is to be reaping after the sowing!   
And in this case there was no harrowing after sowing and that is a very important part of the workto go over the ground again to get the seed well into the soil. I like those Prayer Meetings that harrow in the seed and that private prayer, that secret study of the Word, that private crying unto God, after the seed has been sown, that He would be pleased to cover it up and keep it in the soil, and make it grow ready for the harvest! But, with no plowing before the sowing, and no harrowing afterwards, what result can you expect?   
We meet with hearers who are just like that trodden path. I wonder how many of that sort are here now? As a rule, we have a choice congregation on a Thursday evening because it is not every hypocrite who comes out to a week-night service. I do not say that every hypocrite comes out on Sunday, but we have a hope that persons have some love for the things of God when they come out on a week-night to hear the Gospel. Yet I should not wonder if some of you are no better than you ought to beas hearers of the Word, I mean. Some people come to see what kind of a place the Tabernacle is, or what kind of a person the preacher is. I hope that all of you are perfectly satisfied, now, on both those points, and that you will forget all about the place and the preacher and will just think about yourselves and about that Divine Truth which will not be blessed to your salvation unless it is honestly and genuinely received into your heart. If you receive Christ, He will bring forth fruit in you, but if you remain like the trodden pathway and do not receive Him, what can be the result but your greater condemnation?   
III. The third thing that I learn from this part of the parable is that WE MUST WATCH THE SEED. Ministers have to do thisall Christian workers have to do this! We will try to do it now for a few minutes.   
First, it is clear that when this Seed was sown, it touched the heart. In the 12th verse, we read, Those by the wayside are they that hear, then comes the devil, and takes away the Word out of their hearts. Then it must have reached their heartsand that is the sad part about it. These hearers were not, after all, merely hearers, for they were, to some extent, affected by the Word. They had some serious thoughts for the time being. The Seed did not get deep into their hearts, but it did touch them. It fell on the soil and remained on the soil for a while, though it could not get its rootlets down into it and could not really be absorbed into the ground. And oh, my dear Hearers, it may be that when you hear the Word of God, it does affect you! You have not yet reached that stage in which you can hear it without any feeling whatever. You do feel it and you sometimes weep when you hear it, yet how often we are disappointed, for you seem desperately resolved not to be saved!   
In this case, the Good Seed did not really reach the understanding. Those who heard the Word did not understand it. We are told now that if you touch the heart, that is everythingbut it is not. To touch the heart is something, but you must also touch the understanding if you are to effect any permanent good. I mean that you may gather people together and get up excitement, and work them up in any way you please, for some people are easily movedbut they must understand what it all means if they are to derive real benefit. It is not enough to say, Believe! Believe! Believe! Teach them what they have to believe, or else what good have you done? Shouting, stamping, trawling, crying does not amount to much. People need to be taught to understand the Truth of God, to get a grip of it, to really know the meaning of what they hear. They must know that they are lost. They must know that Christ is the great Substitute for sinners. They must know what the new birth means. Otherwise, if the Truth is not received into the understanding, the mere receiving of it into the emotions will be of very little use whatever. These hearers understood not the Word, so Satan stole it away from them.   
Notice that, all the while, this Good Seed, as it did not get into the understanding, was really outside the man. There it lay upon the surface. That which fell on the good ground had disappeared. You could not find it, for it had sunk into the earth. But here you can see every single grain that has been droppedthere it lies, outside the soil. O my dear Hearer, as long as the Gospel is outside you, it cannot do you any good! So, let it in. Oh, that your broken heart might receive it! Oh, that your plowed-up conscience might accept it and bury the Truth of God within your innermost self, that there it might grow!   
The next thing that happened to it was that as it lay there, somebody came along and trod on it. It was trodden down. It was crushed and smashed. The hearer who does not receive the Truth into his heart, goes outside and meets an old companion who speedily treads on it. Or he gets home to his wife, who does not fear the Lord, and she treads on it. Or, tomorrow, he goes into the workshop and somebody there ridicules him and so treads on the Good Seed.   
Yet, even then, it retained so much of life as to arouse the opposition of Satan. Notice how zealous the devil is. We may be careless about souls, but he never is. Although the Seed lay there on the surface and had never penetrated the soil. And although that Seed had been trodden on, Satan was not satisfied. He said, There may be life in it and if there is, it is dangerous to have lying there, for it may grow. So he comes and takes it away altogether. Some bird of the air devours it. I believe that Satan does not like you to come to a place where the Gospel is preached. He knows that if you stand where the shots are flying, you may get one of them into your heart, so he would rather that you would not come at all. But if you do hear the Gospel, even though it does not penetrate into your heart, yet he still does not like it to be there. So he comes and takes it awayhe makes you forget ithe brings something fresh before you, so that you may fail to remember the good Word of God. Perhaps he suggests a new line of business to you, or there is a new play at the theater, or something fresh to attract your attention because he is afraid of losing you. He does not like losing his servants and, from long experience, he knows that every now and then one of them runs away at night and never comes back. So he is always on the watch for would-be runaways. He does not want you to be gone, so he calls his birds of the air and says to them, Take away that Seed. The man has not received it into his heart, but I do not even like it to be near him. I wish I could clap my hands and so drive those foul birds away, but I ask Gods people to lift their hands in prayer that these sermon thieves may be driven off and that what has been said may abide in your memory.   
My dear Hearers, are any of you content to be like this trodden wayside? Will you continue hearing the Gospel and yet never receive it into your souls? Are you going to be trod on, and trod on, and trod on till you are simply a way for other people to use? Some of you work hard for your living and get nothing out of it. Somebody else is getting the whole of your life. You are simply a rut in which other people go to get riches for themselves. Are you content to let it be so with you in a spiritual sense? Do you mean to be nothing else but just a place for other people to walk over and to use your life for their own ends and purposes?   
Oh, that the Holy Spirit would drive the great steam-plow through you and break you in pieces! It would be the happiest thing that could happen to you, though your misery might be deep and your anguish terrible. And then may He sow you with His own Good Seed, that you may bring forth fruit to life eternal, having in this life joy, peace, restfulness, usefulness and in the world to come life everlasting! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. There is a handful of Seed for you! Believe now, and you shall live. Look! Look! Look and live. Look even now, at this very moment, for you live the moment that you look! God save you, for Christs sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:   
**LUKE 8:1-21.**

Verse 1. And it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God: and the twelve were with Him. Our Lords display of forgiving Grace to the woman who was a sinner seemed to whet His appetite for soulsaving, so that, He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God. Dear Friends, whenever we win a soul for God, let it spur us on to a greater diligence in His service! Let it make us insatiable for more of this best wine of the Kingdom of Heaven. It was so with our Divine Master. He went about preaching and, as He preached, He was training others to also preach the twelve were with Him. I think that whenever there is a successful ministry, there should be those round about who are being trained to continue it. Among the Waldensians, the pastors were always accompanied by young men who learned to preach from their example, and who shared their toils when they went from valley to valley proclaiming the Gospel.

2, 3. And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herods steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance. If they could not be Apostles, they could, at any rate, being women of property, contribute both to the sustenance of Christ and of the Apostles who were with Him. There is a place for everyone who is willing to be used by the great Master-Builder who leaves no stone out of the wall if it is fit to be built into it. There is something for the 12 to do and there is something for the holy women to doand we cannot do without either of them. And in that Last Great Day when the rewards are distributed, there will be as much for Joanna as for John, and as much for Mary Magdalene as for Simon Peter. Did they not each, according to their utility, serve the Lord Jesus Christ?

4, 6. And when much people were gathered together, and were come to Him out of every city, He spoke by a parable: a sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. Or, as Mark records it, because it had no depth of earth. There was just a little coating of earth, sufficient for the fructification and the early sprouting of the seedit came up all the more quickly because it was so near the surface, and because the heat could get at it so easily the hard pan of the rock speedily sending up the heat to it. But, for that very reason, as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

7, 8. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up and bore fruit an hundredfold. And when He had said these things, He cried, He that has ears to hears let him hear. There are many, who have ears, who do not hear to any real purpose. There is the physical act of hearing, but they do not hear in the heart and the mind. It is a very different thing to have an impression on the drum of the ear and to have an impression on the tablet of the heart. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.

9, 10. And His disciples asked Him, saying, What might this parable be? And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. It was a time of judicial visitations. These people had for centuries refused to hear the Voice of God and now they were to pay the penalty for that refusal! The reward of virtue is capacity for higher virtue, just as the effect of vice is a tendency to yet greater vice. When men will not hear the Voice of God, it is a just judgment upon them that they cannot heartheir impotence being the result of their impudence. Since they would not hear, they shall not. Who shall say that this is not a very just and natural way of allowing sin to punish itself? So these people heard the words of our Saviors parable. It was like a clock, a covering to the Truth, but, to them, it hid the Truththey did not see it. To the disciples of Christ, it set forth Truth in all its beauty, but, to the unbelieving people, it hid the Truth, so that they did not discern it. Brothers and Sisters, if you and I understand heavenly mysteries, let us not be proud that it is so, but let us hear our Savior saying to us, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. This is the gift of the Free Grace of God. Be very thankful for it, but give God all the praise for it. For if you begin to say to yourself, I am a man of great understanding, and if you shall take to yourself a high place, God may leave you to your natural blindness and, then, where will you be?

11. Now the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God. Not the word of man. Have we a Word of God at all? Brothers, that is a question which we nowadays have to answer. Our fathers never questioned itthey believed in the Infallibility of the Bible, as we do. But, now, all our wise men do not think so. They set to work to mend the Scriptures, to pick out of the Bible that which they imagine to be Inspired. Let us not do so, my Brothers and Sisters.

12. Those by the wayside are they that hear, then comes the devil and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. He does not mind their merely hearing. What he is afraid of is their believing, for he knows that in believing lies the secret of their salvation.

13. They on the rock are they which, when they hear, receive the word with joy. They are very hasty converts, like men who hurriedly take a bath. They are no sooner in than they are outit is so speedy that there is more haste than real speed with some of them.

13. And these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. These have no root, and they never had any root. If you give your child a little garden for himself, perhaps he will go and pluck the heads off some of your flowers, and put them in the ground, and say, There, Father, see what a nice garden of flowers I have? But they have no root, and so they very soon wither away. These are like mens converts, of whom we read that so many scores came forward the whole of the people in the parish were said to be convertedbut in six weeks you cannot find one of them! How often is this the case! We begin to be afraid of those statistics because there is so little truth in them and yet, if there were but one saved out of a hundred, how grateful we would be!

14. And that which fell among thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. How many we have of that sort! They continue somewhat longer than the others, yet they get choked after all.

15. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. Or, with perseverance, with continuance. He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. He is not converted at all who is not converted eternally. The work of man is temporarythe work of God is everlasting.

16. No man, when he has lighted a candle, covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a bed; but sets it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. A candlestick, or lamp stand. True religion and true doctrine are not intended to be concealed, they are meant to be seen and if any of you are hiding these blessed things away, I pray you to do so no longer. Bring out your candle and put it on the candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

17. For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. You cannot conceal anything from the eyes of God, so do not try to do so. You are like bees in a glass hive, watched while you are working and your every movement observed. God can read the secret emotions of our hidden nature. All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

18. Take heed, therefore, how you hear. You think, and think very properly, that we ought to take heed how we preach. Yes, that is true, but you must take heed how you hear. There are a great many criticisms upon preachingwill you kindly make a few criticisms upon your own hearing? I like what a woman said to me some time ago, about a certain preacher. She said, I heard him well last Sunday. Yes, that is the thing, she did not tell me how he preached, she told me how she heard, and that is the main point. Good hearers will make good preachers, in due time, I do not doubt. God grant that we may be all good hearers! Take heed, therefore, how you hear.

18. For whoever has, to him shall be given, and whoever has not, from him shall be taken even that which he seems to have. Preaching will enrich you or impoverish you according to how you hear. There are some hearers who have nothing and the preacher gives them nothing. Hens like to lay where there is a nest-egg, and preachers of the Gospel like to preach to hearers who have received some Truth and want more. Where there is some love to God, and love to souls, there more will come. May all of you be among those who have, to whom more shall be given! But the Gospel is also a savor of death unto death to some who hear it. It takes away from some men what they never had. You call that a paradox? So it is, but it is true. They think they have it, but the Gospel reveals to them their mistakeand so it takes from them that which they seem to have.

19. Then His mother and His brothers came to Him but could not reach Him because of the crowd. I think that His mother and His brothers were under the delusion that He was mad, and they came to seize Him, to restrain Him, so little did even

they understand Him!

20, 21. And it was told Him by certain which said, Your mother and your brothers stand outside, desiring to see You. And He answered and said unto them, My mother and My brothers are these which hear the Word of God and do it. The spiritual relationship overtops the natural. But what a sweet and condescending word this is. Dear Brothers and Sisters, do you hear the Word of God and do it? If so, Christ is at home with you. Christ calls you, Brother. He knows that you will take care of His cause. He calls you, Brother. He has deep sympathy with you. O blessed One, You who calls us mother and brother, how we welcome those loving and familiar titles!

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LACKING MOISTURE   
NO. 2845

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 1903.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1888.

**And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away because it lacked moisture.   
Luke 8:6.**

IN this parable of the sower, there is great discrimination of character, not only between those who bring forth fruit and those who bring forth none, but also between those who bring forth fruit in different degrees not only between the fruitful and the fruitlessbut also between various forms of fruitlessness. The reasons are given, not in bulk, but in detail why this failed, and that failed, and the other failed. All this points to discrimination in hearing. When there is discrimination in the preacher, as there should always be, there should be an equal discrimination in the hearer, and each one should try to take to himself that special part of the Word which is intended for him.

The true preacher, especially our great Lord and Master, resembles a portrait painted by a real artist which always looks at you, no matter where you are in the roomto the right, or to the left of it, its eyes seem to be fixed upon you. So does our Lord, whenever He preaches, look at us. May He look at us in that way just now and may we catch His eyes as He gazes upon usand may the preacher also seem to be looking straight at you, because you are on the watch for that particular part of the Truth which especially concerns you! If there is anything hopeful and cheering in the sermon, may it come to you who are mourning and doubtful! If there is anything awakening, may it come to those of you who happen to be tinged with self-confidence!

Coming to our text, I think it suggests to us three observations. First, let us note well that there is a reception of the Word of God which fails to be effectual. Secondly, we shall enquire why it fails in these cases. And, thirdly, we shall consider how this failure is to be avoided.

I. First, THERE IS A SOWING THAT COMES TO NOTHING. There is even a reception of the Seed into the soil which disappoints the sower.   
This failure was not because the Seed was bad. It was the same Seed which, in the good soil, produced thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold. You know that, sometimes, when we do not succeed in impressing our hearers, we condemn ourselves, perhaps very justly. If men are not saved, the preacher must not put the blame upon Divine Sovereigntyhe must blame himself. He must also ask himself, Have I really preached the Truth? Have I preached it in a right spirit? Have I preached different Truths in due proportion? Have I given the most weight to that which is of primary importance and have I put that which is secondary in its proper position? We poor sowers often chastise ourselves for our failures, or, if we do not, we ought to do sootherwise we shall never improve. God help us to preach better, to love mens souls more and to be more earnest in seeking to bring them to Christ! I mean this wish for myself and for all of you who love the Lord.   
But there was no fault to be found with the Seed that fell on the rock, although it did not result in a harvest. The Seed was good, thoroughly good. The sower got it from his Master and his Masters granary contains no Seed which will not grow. True preachers can say with the Apostle Peter, We have not followed cunningly devised fables. We have preached to you the Word of God, so that whenever we put our head upon our pillow, we can truly say that we have not preached what we thought, or what we imagined, but we have declared what we believe to be revealed in this blessed Book of God. That is the Good Seed that we sow and if it does not grow in you, it is not the fault of the Seed, it is your own fault. There is something about you that hinders it. Will you think of that, dear Hearer, if you are unconverted?   
But, in the next place, the failure was not from lack of receptiveness. Those hearers who are like the Seed sown on the rock, do receive the Seed. We are expressly told that by our Lord, HimselfThey on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the Word with joy. We have hearers who take in all we say, perhaps too readily. They hear indiscriminately. There are some hearers who are like a spongethey suck up allgood, bad and indifferent. If they hear of a clever, oratorical preacher, they speedily run after him. What he preaches, or whether he preaches with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, is not a matter about which they enquire. They have not much depth of earth, but what little earth there is takes in the Seed. There is not enough depth of earth for the Seed to really bear fruit, yet they do, in some sort of fashion, receive it. I am not going to pile up indiscriminate censure upon this receptiveness. It is a briar upon which a rose may grow but, still, it is a briar until it is properly grafted. Receptiveness may easily be carried too far and men may even ruin themselves by being too ready to receive what they hearnot by being too ready to rightly receive the real Word of Truth, but by receiving it in the wrong fashion. Do they disbelieve what you say? No, they are not earnest enough to do that! Do they doubt what you preach? No, they have not gone so far aside as that. Do they argue against the Gospel? Oh, nothey have not fallen into that form of depravity! They take in what they hear. They do not do much with it. There is not Grace enough in their heart, after they have nominally received the Word, to cause it to grow. There is a lack somewherenot a lack of receptiveness, but a lack in another direction.   
The failure, also, was not caused through lack of heat. There was a hard rock with a little soil upon it, just enough to take in the Seed. That rock needed to be broken up, ground to powder and made into good soil, but as it was not broken upwhen the sun shone, the rock refracted and reflected all the heat and gave great warmth to the soil in which the seed was lyingso that it grew very fast, for it was in a kind of hothouse. We have many hearers who, if enthusiasm could save them, would have been saved long ago. On Sundays they are very soon warmed up, and there is so little of them that the heat of the sun soon penetrates to their rocky nature. The heat is refracted and straightway they are all in a blaze. I know them, they are very nice people to preach to. How excited they grow! They are ready enough to shout, Hallelujah! They speedily receive the Word, but there is no depth about them, so they do not retain it. They will do anything that we want them to do. They are not only enthusiastic, but they soon grow fanatical. I am not blaming them for this. If there were something else to go with it, it would be a good thing.   
The gardener or florist likes a good bottom heat to make his plants grow rapidly, but if it is all heatif it is a dry heat and nothing else, very soon they are scorched to death. The little moisture that was in them at first, makes them grow rapidly, but when that is exhausted, they are soon withered. I do not deny that it is quite a pleasure to meet with a warm-hearted man. We have plenty of people about who are either cold or only lukewarm. If they give you their hand, you feel as if you had laid hold of a fish, it is so cold. We like to meet with hearers who respond to our appeals with kindly friendliness and who, when the Word is brought before them, display a warmth of feeling towards it. These are very hopeful people. I cannot say more about them. Their name is Hopeful, but they do not always grow into Faithful. They give us great encouragement, but, alas, they often cause us great discouragement.  
Then, again, this failure was not caused through lack of joy, for we are told by our Savior that they received the Word with joy. Oh, they are so happy! They feel that they are saved and they are full of joy! And the main reason why they believe that they are saved is that they are so happy. Well, there is something in being joyful. I do not like to see people who seem to have a religion that disagrees with them. True religion does, indeed, make us glad. But then, my dear Friends, if your only evidence of the possession of Grace is that you are so happy, you may be unhappy tomorrowand what will be your state then? Our human nature is so constructed and our body has so much influence upon our mind and soul, that we can soon become very low in spirit and scarcely know why we are in such a condition! That joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit, I cheerfully acknowledge, but there are many joys that are not fruits of the Spirit at all, for they are earth-born and carnal. And there is often a socalled religious joy which is the fruit of carnal excitement and supposed conversionnot the result of a real saving knowledge of God.   
Perhaps if these people had received the Word with sorrowif they had received it with a broken heart and a contrite spiritif they had received it tremblingly, in the very depth of their souls. If they had gone home to cry to God in secret prayer instead of rejoicing in open exultation, there might have been evidences in them of a deeper, surer, truer and more abiding work. These people had joy and plenty of it. I am not saying anything against their joyit was not the point in which they failed. They failed somewhere else, as I shall try to show you presently.

And, once more, they did not fail from lack of eagerness and speed in receiving the Truth. They received it at once and the Seed sprang up at once. Just because they had no depth of earth, it sprang up all the faster. The Seed that fell upon the shallow soil covering the rock grew quicklyit sprang up because of the very absence of the element that was necessary to bring it to perfection! I believe in instantaneous conversion. I believe that the new birth must be instantaneous, that there is a moment in which a man is dead and another moment in which he is alive and that, just as there is a certain instant in which a child is born, so there is an instant in which we become the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. But there is also a supposed conversion which is undone as quickly as it is done. There are to be found, in some churches, men who have grown wonderfully fast. They were drunks a fortnight ago and they are taking the lead among experienced Christians today! Well, it may rightly be so. God acts according to His own Sovereign will and He can work such wonders of Grace and miracles of mercy. But it may turn out that a thing that grows very fast does so because it will not stand fast and will not last long. We have to deal with so many who are always procrastinating and putting off and, therefore, it seems a good fault when men are hasty about these thingsit is a blessed fault, if a fault at all! Yet it did so happen that while these people were excellent in that direction, they failed in another, and failed in a fatal way, of which I have now to speak.   
II. That brings me to ENQUIRE WHY THESE PEOPLE MADE SUCH A SAD FAILURE?   
The seed that fell on the trodden path, while they were lost to the farmer, did feed the birds, at any rate. But these on the rock did not. They quickly sprang up, and were soon withered and good for nothing. They promised much, but it came to nothing at all. And, in this way, some of those who appear to be the most hopeful, may cause us most grief by being our greatest disappointments.   
Now why was this? Luke tells us, and no other Evangelist tells us, that it was because they lacked moisture.   
Does not this mean, first of all, that they lacked the influences of the Divine Spirit? When we speak of spiritual dew, we refer to the operation of the Holy Spirit. When we talk of the river of the Water of Life, we mean those sacred things which come streaming down to us from the Throne of God through the working of the Spirit of God. These people lacked that moisture. They were converted, so far as they were converted at all, through the eloquence of the preacherand a man who is converted by eloquence, can be unconverted by eloquence! Or they were converted by the zeal and earnestness of Christian people. But if you were converted by one man, another man can unconvert you. All that is of man is sure to be unraveled as all the spinning and the weaving of earthly machinery can be pulled to pieces. But the work of Gods Grace endures forever. Have you, my dear Hearer, felt the power of the Holy Spirit first withering you up? The grass withers, the flower fades because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it. Has He ever dried up, in you, all that was of yourself and turned the verdant meadow into a barren wilderness? It must be so with you at firstthere is no sure work which does not begin with emptying and pulling down. Was the Spirit of God ever so worked in you as a spirit of bondage, shutting you up in prison under the Law, fixing your hands in handcuffs and your feet in fetters, putting you in the stocks and leaving you there? If you have never known anything about that experience, I am afraid you have, up to now, lacked moisture.   
Then, when the Spirit of God comes to a soul that is thus broken down, He reveals Christ as a Savior for that sinner, a full Savior for the empty sinner! And oh, how sweetly does the soul rejoice as it perceives the suitability, fullness and freeness of Christand looks to Jesus and trusts Him! Have you ever felt that sacred moisture which softens the heart so that it sweetly yields to Christ, that moisture which refreshes the heart and makes it bloom again with a holy hopefulness and delight in Christ? O my dear Hearers, what we say about the Holy Spirit is no mere talkit is a matter of fact! You must be born-again, born from above! You must be partakers of the Spirit of God, or else all your religion, however beautiful it may appear to be, will wither when the sun has risen with burning heat.   
Now, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you find that everything goes ill with you when you lack moisture. One of our Brothers sometimes says to me, after a service, Oh, Sir, there will be good done today, for there was dew about! I know what he means and hope you also do. You have a little flower at home which you keep in the window, a geranium, or perhaps a fuchsia. You set great store by it because of its associations. But perhaps you have been out for a week and when you come back it looks so drooping that it seems as if it must dieand you soon discovered the reason why. It was quite dryit lacked moisture. You gave it some water and it soon began to revive. These plants are kept alive by moisture. But when they lack moisture, the more the sun shines upon them, or the warmer the room is, the worse it is for them. They need moisture and so do we, poor plants that we are. We need the Holy Spirit and if the Lord does not water us daily from the living springs on the hilltops of Glory, we shall certainly die! So take heed, Brothers and Sisters, that you do not lack the moisture of the Holy Spirits gracious influence.   
Why did these people lack it? There was moisture in the air. It is evident that the other Seed which brought forth thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold, had moisture. Yet this, which was in the same air as the other, lacked moisture. There were morning dews and there were mists and rains, yet these Seeds on the rock lacked moisture. The reason was that there was a lack of power to retain the moisture in the soil. When it came down, it ran off again, or speedily evaporated because there was a rock and only a very little earth on the top of it to hold the moisture, and all that came there soon disappeared. There are many persons who seem to be like this rocky soilthey have no receptiveness for the Divine Spiritthey seem to manage to do without Him.

Now let me warn you of certain things that indicate a lack of moisture. The first is Doctrine without feeling. You believe the Bible Doctrine concerning Christ. I am glad that you do, but dry Doctrine, without the bedewing influence of the Spirit of God, is just a granite rock out of which you will get nothing whatever. You say that you believe the Doctrine of Human Depravity, but have you ever really felt it and mourned over it? You say that you believe the Doctrine of Redemption, but have you ever proved the power of the precious blood of Jesus? Have you ever been melted at the sight of the Cross? You say that you believe the Doctrine of Effectual Calling, but have you been effectually called by Grace? You say that you believe the Doctrine of Regeneration, but have you been bornagain? If not, you lack moisture. I have known some Brothers and Sisters who have been so sound that they have been nothing but sound. Sixteen ounces to the pound, they said they were. I thought that they were 17 ounces to the pound and that the last bad ounce spoilt the other sixteen! You may be wonderfully orthodox and yet be lost! That hard pan of rock must be broken up and ground to powder, that the moisture may get to the Seed. Of what use is Doctrine without feeling?

It is equally worthless where there is experience without humiliation. I mean that some talk about having felt this, and having felt thatand they boast of it. Some of them have even thought that they have become perfectand they glory in it. Well, they lack moisture! As soon as you get side by side with them, you feel a need of something, you do not quite know what it is. It is dry experience. Perhaps it is boiling hot, but it is very dry. There is no bowing before the Lord in a humble confession of unworthiness. There is no understanding of what it is to feel the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should loathe ourselves, as condemned criminals ought to do. I pray the Lord to save us from an experience, however perfect it seems, which is not moist, which has not a living tenderness worked into it by the power of the Spirit of God. Avoid, then, experience without humiliation.

Also shun practice without heart-love. I have known some Brothers and Sisters who have been most exact and precise in all their conduct. I have thought that they scarcely ever sinned and I have not wondered that they did not because there did not seem to be enough juice in them to sin. They did not appear to have any human nature in them. They were just like dry pieces of leathernever excited, never getting into a bad temperthey have not seemed to have any temper, either bad or good. They never say a word too hastily. They always measure things out very exactly, yet a lack of love is a fatal lack. I knew one whom I greatly esteemed as a minister of the Word for many years. I esteemed him for his regularity of conduct. I believe that he got up to the tick of the clock, that he had family prayer to the tick of the clock and that he did everything in the same methodical manner. I remarked to him once, There are many people, round about your Chapel, who are living in the depths of sin. Do you ever get any of them into your place of worship? No, he replied, I do not want to get them in. I asked, Why? Well, he answered, they are mostly harlots and thieves. What could I do with such people?

Then I saw that it was possible to be regular, precise and good up to a certain point, and yet to have no moisture. And as the moisture was not there, of course no thief or harlot would go to hear himhe was too dry for them. It is an awful thing to have a Pharisaic practiceperfect when looked at by the casual eye, yet without the life and light of loveand, therefore, lacking moisture.

Beware, dear Friends, of a belief that never had any repentance connected with it, for that is another way in which the lack of moisture is manifested. There are some people who are willing to believe a great deal, but you never hear of them groaning because of sin, or confessing it with a broken heart in true humility before God. To trust in repentance without faith would be ruinous to the soulbut to have a kind of faith without repentance, would also be ruinous. If faith never has tears in its eyes, it is a dead faith. He who has never wept because of his sin, has never really had his sin washed away. If your heart has never been broken on account of sin, I will not believe that it was ever broken from sin. And if your heart is not broken from your sin, you are still at a distance from your God and you will never see His face with acceptance.

Beware, also, of a confidence that is never associated with selfdiffidence. Yes, my dear Sir, speak as boldly as you will, be as brave as you may for your Master, but, at the same time, be very lowly in spirit. Let your own weakness be seen, as well as your Masters strength. While you glory in Christs merits, confess your own sinfulness and admit that in yourself, you are nothing. We can never have too much confidence in God, but, unless it is associated with deep self-distrust, it will lack moisture and it will never produce any real harvest unto God.

Beware, also, of action without spirituality. We have many people of that kind. They are very active in serving God in one way and another. Would that all wereif it were in a right spirit! They are busy from morning to night, but there is no prayer and no dependence upon God mingled with their effortsthat will not do. That is all wasted activity. However busy we may be, we shall effect nothing unless we receive from the Holy Spirit all the power with which we work and are dependent upon Him for the success of every word we say. Beware of having so much to do that you really do nothing at all because you do not wait upon God for the power to do it right.

Then there is another dry thing, namely, zeal without communion with God. Zeal for extending the Kingdom of Christ, zeal for spreading the denomination, zeal for the advance of a particular sect, zeal that is intolerant, probably, but, all the while, no careful walking according to Gods Word, no observing what God would have us to be zealous about, no humbling of ourselves in the Presence of the great Lord of all, and no bathing of ourselves in the river of the Water of Life by fellowship with God.

Thus I might keep on showing you various ways in which people may have a great deal that is very good, yet it will all come to nothing because they lack moisture. But the seed cannot assimilate the dry earth until it is mixed with water and held in solution, and spiritual life can only be fed by Truth held in solution by the Holy Spirit. When He softens and prepares us, then our roots and rootlets take up the true nutriment and we grow.

In the case of the seed upon the rocky ground, there was, also, a deficiency of sensitive vitality. The seed grew for a time, and then became dryand are there not multitudes of people, in our Churches now, who are just like that? They are as dry as old hay, they have withered away. We cannot turn them out, but, oh, that we could turn life into them! Oh, that the Water of Life might flow all about them, so that they might live and bring forth fruit unto God!

I have said enough, if God shall bless it, to set many people searching their hearts to see whether this sacred moisture is there.   
III. Now, to close, we are to CONSIDER HOW THE EVIL IS TO BE AVOIDED.   
Well, first, let us one and all cry to God to break up the rock. Rock, rock, rock, will you never break? We may scatter the Seed upon you, but nothing will come of it till that rock is broken. The great steam-plow needs to be driven right through mens hearts till they are torn in sunder and the old rock of nature is ground to powder, made soft and turned into good soil. Dear Friend, do pray to God to make sure work of you. As far as you are concerned, the one thing you have to do is to believe in Christ Jesus, that you may be saved. But a part of the process of your salvation is the taking out of you the heart of stone and the giving to you of a heart of flesh. There is no true growing unless this takes place.   
The next thing is, look well to spirituality. This moisture was a very subtle thing. Men might easily overlook that dampness in the atmosphere and in the soil which was all-essential. Who can tell you what unction is? Yet a sermon without unction is a poor, worthless thing. There is a certain secret something which distinguishes a true Christian from a worldling or a mere professorsee that you have it. Do not be content with the Creed, Baptism, the Lords Supper, or anything else that is visible, but say, Lord, give me the moisture that I need. Give me that secret something without which I shall be lacking the very thing which I most need. You cannot see your soul. You cannot fully tell what it is. Yet you know that it is a something that keeps your body alive and when that something is gone, the body becomes deadso is all religion dead until it receives the life which comes from the moisture that so many lack.   
That leads me further to say, look to the Holy Spirit. Be very tender towards the Holy Spirit. We preach Christ to you, as we are commanded to do, but we do not want you ever to forget the blessed Spirit, without whom nothing saving can ever be worked in you! You cannot make yourself to be born-again. Even the faith that saves is the work of the Spirit of God, if it is the faith of Gods elect. Be zealous and tender, therefore, and walk carefully in reference to the Spirit of God lest you grieve Him.   
Then I would say, next, try to avoid all dry heat. Do not work yourself up into a frenzy and think that there is anything saving in it. The heat of excitement may be necessary, just as dust flies from the wheels of a chariot when it moves swiftly, but, as the dust does not help the chariot, but is a nuisance to those who are riding in it, so is it with excitement. It does not help the true movement and it is a nuisance to those who are living near to God.   
Lastly, be constantly looking for that Divine mystery of secret vitality which is called in the text, moisture. I commend to you this prayer, Lord, give me this blessed moisture. Saturate me through and through with the heavenly dew, the Divine rain, that I may grow and bring forth fruit to the Glory of Your holy name. God bless you, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 42.**

We often read this Psalm because we are very often in the same state that the Psalmist was in when he wrote itand the language seems to suit us at many periods of our life.

Verse 1. As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God. It is the hart that pants and, in the Hebrew, the word is in the feminine. The old naturalists say that the female has greater thirst than the male and that it shows it more, having more feebleness of body and less power of endurance. The hart is said to be, naturally, a thirsty creature, and when it has been long hunted, its thirst seems to be insatiable. The Psalmist does not say, your soul hungers, but, My soul thirsts. As man can bear hunger much longer than he can bear thirst, he may continue without food for days, but not without drink. So the Psalmist mentions the most thirsty creature and the most ardent of the natural passionsAs the hart pants after the water brooks. He does not merely say, after the brooks, but, after the water brooks. Why is this? I think it is because there are many brooks that are dry at certain seasons and the hart longs for those that have water in them. So the Christian thirsts, not only for the means of Gracethey are the brooks but he longs for God in the means. When Grace is in the means of Grace, then they are water brooks, indeed. So pants my soul after You, O God. He does not say, So I pant after my former grandeur, or, so pant I for my friend, but, so pants my heart after You. His soul had only one longing, one thirstand every power and every passion had united itself to that one desireso pants my soul after You, O God.

2. My soul thirsts for God. It was a soul thirst, not a throat thirstthe thirst had got as far down as the soul, till the inner spirit was as dry as a mans throat after a long journey through the desert. My soul thirsts for God,

2. For the living God. David had thirsted, you remember, for water from the well of Bethlehem that is within the gate and he said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate! But that was not living waterhe had drunk of it before, yet he thirsted again. But now his soul thirsted for God, for the living God. Nothing but the cool refreshing Living Water of the Living God can ever effectually quench human thirst!

2. When shall I come and appear before God? He valued the assembly of Gods people because he believed that there, in a special manner, he was before God. What a rebuke this is to those who despise public worship! We know some who say, Well, we can read a good sermon at home, we can study the Scriptures there. David was a great lover of Gods Word and read it both day and night, yet even he could not dispense with the outward means of Gracethe public assembly of the saints. When shall I come and appear before God? Brothers and Sisters, let us look upon our gatherings for worship as an appearance before God! You do not merely come to listen to the Lords minister, or to join in the sacred song of the congregation, but you come to appear before God, that you may show yourself to Him as His servants and that He may reveal Himself to you as your Lord. When you and I have been tossing upon the bed of languishing, or have been detained upon the sea, or have journeyed abroad, then we have learned to prize the means of Grace more than ever!

3. My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is your God? The Psalmist had sorrow within and persecution without, and a Christian sometimes has to eat salty food. My tears have been my food. He finds but very little sweetness or solace in such food as this, yet, after all, there is much in a Christians tears. It is a comfort to be able to shed tears of repentance and tears of longing after God. There are some Believers who still have tears for their food, yet they can say, Thank God we are not deadif we can weep, we are not utterly left of God. If we can sigh after Him and so, though our tears are salt, they are nourishing to the spirit. My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is your God? This is what our enemies always say to us when we are in trouble. This is what Queen Mary said when the Covenanters were obliged to flee to the Highlands. Where now is John Knoxs God? But when her French soldiers were afterwards put to the rout by the brave Scots, she found out where God was! This was the taunt at the St. Bartholomew massacre in France. As they murdered the Protestants, the Papists cried, Where is your God? What a mercy it is that they say this, for nothing brings God so soon to His people as the taunts of their enemies. If any man supposes that God has forgotten His people and, therefore, insults them thus, God will come to them post-haste to rectify the mistake. Where is your God? He is coming to you, O Christian! He is near you now!

4. When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the House of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day. You see, Brothers and Sisters, the more a man enjoys the means of Grace at one time, the more he grieves when he loses them. I had gone with the multitude. There is something very inspiring in worshipping God in a crowd. The joy is infectious, there is a holy contagion in it. As the sacred song floats upward from many joyous voices, we seem borne up upon its billows of praise. I like that word holy day even though it is rather like holiday, for our holy days should be our true holidays. There should be no rest to the Christian like the holiness of the Sabbaththe holiness should be the very joy of it. Keep it a holy day, and then it will be a holiday! Try to make it a holiday and then it will be neither a holiday nor a holy day. At the remembrance of these past joys, the Psalmists soul was poured out like water, his heart was as water spilt upon the ground. See, Brothers and Sisters, how low a good man may come, and yet be safe how near the rocks Gods ships may go and yet not be wrecked.

5. Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance. As one well remarks, Christian men have a deal of indoor work to do. They have not only to question others, but they have to question themselves. Why are you cast down, O my soul? Be very jealous, dear Friends, of doubts, and fears, and despondency. Some of us are sometimes the subjects of these emotions and this is sad, but when we try to pamper them, this is inexcusable. Endeavour to live above this disquietudeyou cannot praise God, you cannot serve your fellow men, you cannot do anything well when your soul is in a disquieted state. Hope in God is the best cure for this despondency. Hope you in God. When you have no hope in yourself, nor in your graces, nor in your experience, hope you in God. He is loving, faithful, powerful and true, so, hope you in God. For I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance. My countenance is wrinkled and covered with sores through my sickness, but He is the help of my countenance, and I shall yet praise Him.

6. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. Oh, what a mercy it is to be able to look back upon our past experiences of Gods mercy! How delightful it is to remember what the Lord was to us in days gone by, for He is the same God still. When you are like Paul in the great storm, when neither sun, nor moon, nor stars for many days appeared, it is very pleasant to remember that the sun, moon and stars did shine in the past, and that they will shine forth again.

7. Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterspouts: all Your waves and Your billows are gone over me. When there is a great rain at sea, there is a peculiar kind of noise, as if the deep above were talking to the deep below. Deep calls unto deep and, sometimes, the two deeps clasp hands and then there is what we call a waterspout. The Psalmist uses this as a picture of his sorrows and it is very remarkable that sorrows seldom come alone. When the rain comes down on land, it calls to the little brooks, and they say, Here we are, and they go leaping down the hillside and speak to the rivulets, and they say, Here we are, and the rivulets speak to the rivers, and they say, Here we are, and they speak to the gulfs, and the gulfs to the broad sea till, deep calls unto deep. So, little sorrows, great sorrows, overwhelming sorrows come to the Christian and they all seem to come at once! No, not only do they come to us, but they go over us till we cry, All Your waves and Your billows are gone over me. Surely, this language is an exaggeration, for it is only Christ who could say that, but, sometimes, when you and I are in a low dark frame of mind, we are apt to think that we have felt all the twigs of the rod and that we could not be made to smart more. Little do we really know of itGod grant that we may never know more than we do! Now comes an exercise for faith to be able, when down at the bottom of the sea, like Jonah, and at the mercy of every wave, to say with the Psalmist in the next verse

8. Yet the LORD will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. We shall not only have daytime Grace, but nighttime Grace, too! In the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. What a sweet title that is, The God of my life, the source of my life, the strength of my life, the comfort of my life, without whom my life is not life at all!

9. I will say unto God my rock, Why have You forgotten me? He had been talking too much to himselfnow he talks with his God.   
9-11. Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is your God? Why are you cast down, O my soul and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God. Notice how the Psalmist had been growing. In the 5th verse, where the refrain comes in, it is very nearly the same as it is here, yet there is some difference. There it was, I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance, but here it is, I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance. Then it was God helping the poor wrinkled brow to turn towards Heaven. Now it is God Himself giving the man joy and rest. Then there is the last utterance of the Psalmist on that occasion, My God. He could not reach that note before, and when the Christian can say, My God, his troubles are at an end.

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SATANS PUNCTUALITY, POWER AND PURPOSE   
NO. 1459A

WRITTEN AT MENTONE,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON.

**Then comes the devil, and takes away the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.   
Luke 8:12.**

IT is a great comfort that such multitudes are willing to hear the Word of God. Even though many should turn out to be as the rock, the wayside, or the thorny ground, still it is a cheering circumstance that the Seed can be sown broadcast over so large an acreage. Yet the thoughts excited by the sight of a vast congregation are not all pleasurablethe question most naturally arisesWhat will come of all this preaching and hearing? Will the heavenly Seed produce a harvest or fall on barren soil? The thoughtful Christian, in considering this question, takes into consideration the condition of the persons addressed and remembers that many are unprepared for the Gospel. So far from being like a field furrowed to receive the Seed, they are like a heavily traveled road.

They hear the Gospel and so far we are hopeful of them, but they have no idea of allowing it to enter their inmost souls. The ground of their hearts is already too much occupied. Other feet will tread there and speedily obliterate the sowers footprints and as for the good Seed, it may lie where it fallsentrance into the inner man it can have none. Nor is this all, the anxious observer remembers that there is yet another difficultythe arch-enemy of God and man is opposed to the salvation of souls and, therefore, he is present with destructive power wherever the Seed of the Word is being sown.

It is of this we shall now speakthe activity of Satan during the preaching of the Gospel. He is out of sight, but we may not allow him to be out of mindhe does all the more mischief if men sleep. Let us watchfully turn our eyes towards him and prove that we are not ignorant of his devices. Our Divine Lord, in the words before us, reminded His hearers of the devils punctualitythen comes the devil, or his powerand takes away the Word out of their hearts. And of his purpose, which is the prevention of saving faithlest they should believe and be saved. At this time, when special services are being held, it may be well to bring these points clearly forward that all may be warned against the Wicked One and so, by the Grace of God, his designs may be frustrated.

I. First observe the Evil Ones PUNCTUALITY. No sooner does the Seed fall than the fowls devour it. Our text says then, that is, then and there comes the devil. Mark renders it, Satan comes immediately. Whoever else may loiter, Satan never does. No sooner does a camel fall dead in the wilderness than the vultures appear. Not a bird was visible, nor did it seem possible that there could be one within a radius of many miles, yet speedily there are specks in the sky and soon the devourers are gorging themselves with flesh! Even thus do the spirits of evil scent their prey from afar and hasten to their destroying work.

The lapse of time might give opportunity for thought and thought might lead to repentance and, therefore, the enemy hurries to prevent the hearer from considering the Truth he has heard. When the Gospel has somewhat affected the hearers, so that in some slight degree it is in their hearts, then swifter than the flight of the eagle is the haste of the devil to take the Word out of their hearts. A little delay might put the case beyond Satanic power, hence the promptness of diabolic activity. O that we were half as quick and active in the service of our Lord! One half as prompt to seize every opportunity for blessing the souls of men!

No doubt Satan acts at times directly upon the thoughts of men. He personally suggested to Judas the selling of his Master and many another black insinuation has he cast into mens minds. Like the foul vulture which constantly feasted itself upon the vitals of Prometheus, so does the devil tear away the good thoughts which would be the life of a mans soul. Insatiably malicious, he cannot endure that a single Divine Truth should bless the heart. Fearful blasphemies, lewd imaginations, gross unbeliefs, or vain frivolities the devil casts into the mind like infernal bombshells to destroy any new-born thought which looks toward Christ and salvation!

At one time he fascinates the mind and another he terrifies it. His one aim is to distract the mans thoughts from the Gospel and prevent its lodging in the conscience and heart. As Satan cannot be everywhere present at one time, he frequently does his evil work by his servants, sending the inferior spirits to act as fowls in devouring the Seed and these, again, employ various agents. With great cunning are the common incidents of life used in the evil business, so that even by things indifferent in themselves, the purposes of the adversary are brought about. The preacher has some specialty in his manner, utterance, or appearanceand this becomes the bird which devours the Seedthe hearer is so taken up with a trifling oddity in the minister that he forgets the Truth of God which was spoken!

An anecdote was related, an illustration employed, or a word used which awakened a memory in the hearers breast and away went the Word out of his heart to make room for mere vanity. Or if the sermon was preserved to its close, it then encountered a fresh perila lost umbrella, an extra pressure in the aisle, a foolish jest overheard in the crowd, or the absurd dress of an unknown person any one of them may answer the devils purpose and snatch away the Word. Little does it matter whether the Seed is devoured by black crows or white doves, by great fowls or little sparrowsif it does not abide in the heart, it cannot bring forth fruit and hence the devil arranges that somehow he will take away the Seed at once.

If he never visits a place of worship at any other time, he will be sure to be there when a revival has begunthen comes the devil. He lets many a pulpit alone, but when an earnest man begins preaching, Satan comes immediately.

II. Secondly, we will now, for a moment, notice his POWER. And takes away the Word out of their hearts. It is not said that he tries to do it, but that he actually does so. He sees, he comes and he conquers! The Word is there and the devil takes it away as easily as a bird removes a seed from the wayside. Alas, what a sway has the Evil One over the human mind and how ineffectual is the preachers work unless a Divine power is put forth with it!

Perhaps from the striking manner in which it was stated, a little of the Truth of God abides in the memory, but the enemy takes it quite out of the heartand so the main part, the all-important part of our work is undone! We may be foolish enough to aim at the head only, but he who is crafty beyond all craft deals with the heart. Anyone may win the intellect if Satan can keep the affections he is quite content. To the mans heart the good Seed is lost, the fowls have devoured it. It has become to him nothing, having no power over him, no life in him. Not a trace is leftno more than there would be a mark remaining of seed cast on the wayside after the birds had taken it awayso effectual is the work of the Prince of the Power of the Air.

When Satan thinks it worth his while to come, and come immediately, he means business and he takes care that his errand shall not fail. His power is partly derived from his natural wisdom. Fallen as he now is, he was once an angel of light and his superlative faculties, though perverted, defiled and dimmed by the blighting influence of sin, are still vastly superior to those of the human beings upon whom he tries his arts. He is more than a match for preacher and hearer united if the Holy Spirit is not there to baffle him. He has also acquired fresh cunning by long practice in his accursed business! He knows the human heart better than anyone, except its Maker. For thousands of years he has studied the anatomy of our nature and is conversant with our weaker points. We are all young and inexperienced compared with this ancient tempterall narrow in our views and limited in our experience compared with this serpent who is more subtle than all the beasts of the fieldwhat wonder that he takes away the Word which is sown in hard hearts!

Moreover, he derives his chief power from the mans condition of soul. It is easy for birds to pick up Seed which lies exposed on a hard path. If the soil had been good and the Seed had entered it, he would have had far greater difficulty, he might even have been foiled. But a hard heart does the devils work for him in great measure. He need not use violence or craftthere lies the unreceived Word upon the surface of the soul and he takes it away. The power of the Evil One largely springs from our own evil. Let us pray the Lord to renew the heart that the testimony of Jesus may be accepted heartily and may never be taken away. Great is the need for such prayer!

Our adversary is no imaginary being, his existence is real, his presence constant, his power immense, his activity indefatigable. Lord, match him and overmatch him! Drive away this foulest of fowls! Break up the soil of the soul and let Your Truth truly live and graciously grow within us!

III. Our short sermon closes with the third point, which is the devils PURPOSE. He is a sound theologian and knows that salvation is by believing in the Lord Jesus and, therefore, he fears above all things lest men should believe and be saved. The substance of the Gospel lies in those few words, believe and be saved, and in proportion as Satan hates that Gospel, we ought to prize it. He is not so much afraid of works as of faith. If he can lead men to work, or feel, or do anything in the place of believing, he is content. But it is believing that he dreads, because God has coupled it with being saved.   
Every hearer should know this and be instructed to turn all his attention to the point which the devil considers to be worthy of his whole activity. If the Destroyer labors to prevent the hearts believing, the wise will have their wits about them and regard faith as the one thing necessary. Lest they should believe and be saved Satan takes away the Word out of their hearts. Here also is wisdomwisdom hidden within the enemys cunning. If the Gospel remains in contact with the heart, its tendency is to produce faith. The Seed abiding in the soil springs up and brings forth fruit and so will the Gospel display its living power if it dwells within the man and, therefore, the devil hastens to take it away.

The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit and the devil does not like to see it lie near the sinner for fear it should wound him. He dreads the influence of Truth upon the conscience and if he cannot prevent a mans hearing it, he labors to prevent his meditating upon it. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Godto obliterate that which has been heard is the Satanic method of preventing faith. Here, again, is a practical word for the ear of prudencelet us keep the Gospel as much as possible near the mind of the unconvertedlet us sow and sow again, in the hope that some grain may take root.

Countrymen were known in planting certain seeds to put in one for the worm, and one for the crow, and then a third which would surely grow, and we must do the same. In the book of Jeremiah the Lord describes His own action thusI spoke unto you rising up early and speaking, but you heard not; and I called, but you answered not. Surely, if the Lord Himself has thus continued to speak to an unanswering race, we need not murmur if much of our preaching should appear to be in vain! There is life in the Seed of the Gospel and it will grow if it can be put into the soil of the heart! Let us, therefore, have faith in it and never dream of obtaining a crop except by the old-fashioned way of sowing good Seed. The devil evidently hates the Wordlet us, then, keep to it and sow it everywhere!

Reader or Hearer, you have often heard the Gospelhave you heard it in vain? Then the devil has had more to do with you than you have dreamed! Is the thought a pleasant one? The presence of the devil is defiling and degrading and he has been hovering over you as the birds over the high-road and lighting upon you to steal away the Word. Think of this! You are missing, by your unbelief, fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christand instead thereof you are having fellowship with Satan!

Is not this horrible? Instead of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you as He dwells in all Believers, the Prince of Darkness is making you his resort, coming and going at his pleasure into your mind! You remember Jacobs dream of a ladder and angels ascending and descending from himself to Heaven? Your life experience may be set forth by another ladder which descends into the dark abyssand up and down its rungs, foul spirits come and go to yourself! Does this startle you? The Lord grant it may! Do you desire a change? May the Holy Spirit turn your heart into good ground and then shall the Seed of Divine Grace grow in you and produce faith in the Lord Jesus!

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HEEDFUL HEARING   
NO. 3357

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 1913.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 23, 1868.

**Take heed, therefore, how you hear.   
Luke 8:18.**

It is implied in this verse that you do hear. A man cannot take heed how he hears if he does not hear at all. Hence, how great is the sin of a vast proportion of the inhabitants of this city who utterly forsake the ministry of the Gospel, who never hear it, or hear it but only now and then! We have frequently met with people who, before they came to this house, never attended any place of worship. They were taken there, they say, to be christened, or they went there to be married and they expected to be carried there, or somewhere like it, to be buried, but that was all their church going and all their respect for the worship of God. Unhappy theyto have the Light of God and to refuse to seeto have Gods diamond lying, as it were, at their very feet, and yet to refuse to pick it up! The day will come when wasted Sabbaths will be a burning accusation against the inhabitants of this privileged, but wicked city! With churches in almost every street, with preachers of the Gospel to be found here and there declaring fully the saving Truth of God, it shall go harder with the citizens of London than with the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day when the Lord comes to judge the quick and the dead! Do I address any who have merely dropped in here tonight, but who are not often hearers of Gods Word? Ah, my dear Friends, you little know the sweetness of the Gospel, for if you did, not tents of ease nor thrones of power could tempt your feet away from the place where God specially reveals Himself on the Day of Rest!

Do you think how unjustly you are treating your God? There are seven days in the week and He gives you six, but you rob Him of the seventh. You are like a man on the highway who met a beggar and seeing him to be in great needand having but seven pounds in his pocket, he gave the beggar sixand then the beggar knocked him down and stole the seventh from him! He was an ungrateful wretchand what are you? You shall answer for yourselves.

It is implied, again, in the text that a man hears the Gospel, for it does not matter much how you hear if it is not Gods message, if it is not the Truth of God. The best way to hear a lie is not to hear it at all. The best way to hear preaching that is not according to Gods Gospel is to hear enough of it to know what it is and then walk off and hear no more. But it is implied that you do hear the Gospel and here comes the enquiryDo those who frequent places of worship invariably ask themselves the questionIs the preacher a Gospel preacher? Does he preach according to the Holy Scriptures? Does he deliver to me the Truth of God, or is it a cunningly devised fable or invention of his own? I fear that the most of our hearers only ask, Is he a fluent speaker? Is he a high-soaring rhetorician? Can he pile his words, one upon another? Or is he amusing? Does he use many illustrations and metaphors? Will there be something to interest me? Ah, but, my Hearers, if the bread is poisoned, it is of small concern that the baker makes it up into pretty loaves! If it is not a Gospel draught that is given you to drink, it is a small matter to you whether the cup is richly designed or not. Better that you have it in the poorest pot and drink from that, if it is from the river of the Water of Life, than that you receive untruth out of a golden cup! The chief matter with a hearer when he goes to a town to live and has to enquire, Where shall I attend on the Lords-Day? should be thisWhere can I hear most concerning the Lord Jesus Christ? Where shall I hear a man who can touch my conscience? Where shall I hear the Truth that will be quick, powerful and sharp as a two-edged sword to my soul? Where may I hope to be saved? Where may I trust, being saved, that I may be helped on the road to Heaven? All the rest is mere matter of taste, but this is a matter of the utmost importance! Is it the Gospel or not? If it is not the Gospel, let not your feet tread the floor! But if it is the Gospel of Jesus, then forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.

But now, these two things being grantedthat we ought to hear and that it ought to be the Gospelthe text graciously counsels us, Take heed how you hear. We purpose to handle our theme after this fashion. First, there is a caution implied in the text. Secondly, there are rules intended in it. And then again, there are strong reasons for it. First, there is

I. A CAUTION IMPLIED IN THE TEXT.   
Take heed how you hear. The caution is that we should not think it a trifling thing to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Take heedas though you had to stop on the threshold and remember where you are. Take heed, take heed and remember, then, that it is no trifling thing to hear a sermon if it is a Gospel sermon! Some think it is a simple work to preach and childs play to sit and listen. When the great trumpet peals and the dead are awakened, they will think very differently! They will reckon that speech was never put to so noble a purpose as when it was used to bring men to reconciliation with their Makerand that ears were never used to as good an end as when they were used attentively to hear what God the Lord would speak when He would bid the rebel come to Him and find mercy! The preacher, if he is what he should be, does not think it a light or easy thing to preach. It is said of Luther that he never feared any man and yet he declares that he never preached a sermon without his knees knocking together because he trembled lest he should be guilty of the blood of any of his hearers. This is the great burden of my life, lest I should miss anything that should be profitable to you. Lest, in dealing with Gods Word, I should be like some untaught chemists lad who is mixing medicines which were meant for restoring health, but who introduces poisons into them. No! But I would tell you all I know, tell you all Gods Word as I have learned it and speak it honestly, affectionately and plainly, trusting thus to be clear of the blood of all men!   
But in proportion as it is solemn work to preach, it is also solemn work to hear. When men enter kings palaces, they become at once respectful, they regard their company, they pay marked attention to the head of the householdand should they not, when they come into the assembly of Gods people to join in the worship of the Most High? Should they not, after the same sort, say, How awe-inspiring is this place where the Gospel is preached! It is none other than the House of God, and the very gate of Heaven?   
Because, then, it is no light and trivial thing to hear a sermon, take heed how you hear!   
Again, it is no easy thing to hear a sermon well, and hence the appeal of the text, Take heed how you hear. The fool cannot hear it well. He lets it in one ear and out the other! The mere critic hears it, but without any profit to himself. Multitudes have heard hundreds, possibly thousands of sermons, but they have not been benefited therebythey have let the golden stream run past themand not one single drop of the precious treasure have they retained. The art of listening to the preaching of the Gospel is one of the highest arts in the world and conduces to the best results! Dont you suppose when you have come up those step, and taken your seats, that you are all ready for the sermon. No! No, it is not so! If you would have good fruit of it, there ought to be as much preparation on your part as on mine. Am I to pray that I may be a blessing to you, and are you not to pray that you may get a blessing out of the words? Are you to come flippantly, or even carelessly into these seats and sit down, and then hope to be edified? If so, indeed, you shall usually find your hopes disappointed! Take heed how you hear, because it is not a little thing, nor an easy thing, to listen to the Gospel of Jesus!   
Take heed how you hear, implies this cautionthat it is no light thing to hear the Gospel irreverently, for on the bad hearing may hang not only the loss of the blessing which might have come, but the infliction of a punishment which shall be the greater for careless hearing. Men never listen to a Gospel sermon and remain as they were. They are either bettered by it orshall I say worsened?if there is such a word. It is not possible that the Gospel should have shined on those eyes without either giving light or increasing the blindness. I do not believe that any man has regularly sat under the sound of a Gospel ministry for three months without being either sensibly hardened or manifestly softened by it. You know how childrens characters are formed, how day after day, and week after week, bring impressions for good or for evil upon their sensitive minds. And it is just the same with ourselves. Every Truth of God that passes before the camera of our soul leaves some degree of impression upon the sensitive plate of our characterand we are either blessed by it, or cursed by it, as the case may be. It must be either a savor of life unto life to us, or of death unto death. It is no light thing to have heard amiss!

But there is also a sweet caution that springs out of the text if you think it over. Take heed how you hear, for it may be a blessed thing to hear, and no one can tell the weight of mercy that may come from the hearing! I have heard of a child who used to lean forward so earnestly to catch every wordhe told his mother it was because he had heard the preacher say that if there was a sentence in the sermon that was likely to save one soul, the devil would, if it were possible, be sure to get you to be inattentive while that was being said! Now the boy was right, and there was a great truth in it. If men did but always catch the Word of God, speaking after the manner of men, what chances there would be that that Word would be blessed to them! And what a blessing it would be! Why, there may be some here tonightfor there have been such here many nightswho have come in here having had a miserable life of it up till now and their wife and children a more miserable life, still, if it is possible, for they have been frequenters of the ale-house, spending their money in riotousness. But what if they should be sobered tonight by Divine Grace and get new hearts and right spiritsthat would be blessed hearingblessed for the family, for the wife and children, as well as for the man himself!   
There may have come in here some poor desponding men and women, ready to make away with themselves. Oh, perhaps in the hearing, tonight, the joy of the Lord may come to them and they may be saved! Many and many have found out that they were the children of God while they were hearingfound out that Christ was theirs, pardon of sin was theirs, Heaven was theirs! And they would never have found it if it had not been for hearing it! But while they were listening, Gods Holy Spirit opened their hearts to perceive and receive what had all the while been written in the Scriptures!   
Oh, may it be a blessed night to some of you while you are here! Pray for it, people of God! The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Let your prayer go up that souls here may so hear the Word of the Gospel of salvation as being a great message from God and, therefore, may hear it with all their hearts and so listen to it that it may be salvation unto them according to the Masters promise, Incline your ears and come unto Me: hear and your souls shall live. Now, and at somewhat greater length   
II. THE TEXT IMPLIES SOME RULES AS TO HEARING.   
The text is multum in parvomuch in little. Take heed how you hear, means many things. Do not be alarmed when I say that we shall have seven points under this head. That you may remember them, I have put them in the order of the alphabet.   
Take heed how you hear. That is, first, take heed that you hear attentively. And it will not burden your memories if I hook on to that word another like itretentivelythat heed that you hear attentively and retentively. I have heard of a poor idiot who was an excellent hand, idiot though he was, at carrying messages. And the way in which he did it was to deliver the message exactly as he had it, word for word. But he had a great peculiarity. While the person told him the message, he always stood with one hand closing one of his earsand as soon as ever he had got the message, he put the other hand up and closed the other ear so that both ears were shutand away he ran! When asked why he did it, he said that when the message came he did not want it to get out at one earand then when he had received it, he shut the other ear in order that it might not get out that way! Observe, fool though he was, there was wisdom in the action. I wish there were as much wisdom in some who would not like to be called fools, for they hear the Truth of God with one ear and it goes out the other! It were well if they took care not to let it escape them. Have your ears open with keen, attentive listeningand then have both of them shut as being retentive to keep in the Truth you have received. But alas, many do not even hear at all. The Gospel is being preached, but they are thinking of a thousand other things. Distracting thoughts fill their minds.  
We all know how hard it is for the marksman to shoot a running deer. And how difficult it must be for the preacher to strike the running judgment and the moving, restless mind that is preoccupied with other things! But if we can get the whole mind fixed on the subject before us, as it should be, then we may hope to make an impression. Do labor, dear Friends, to whomever you may be listening, to put those distractions awaythe thoughts of house and home and all besides, while the Gospel is operating upon your minds! And when you have heard it, try to store it up and keep it there. If it is good for today, it is good for tomorrow! And if it does not bless you today in the hearing, perhaps God may bless it to you in years to come. We have read of a man who was converted through a sermon, but he heard the sermon 70 years before it was blessed to him! Mr. Flavel had preached it and the man was sitting, 70 years later, under a hedge in the United States. And he recollected that it was 70 years ago that day that he had heard the sermonand God, then and there, blessed the sermon to him and he was saved! Hear, then, attentively and retentively!   
The second point ishear believingly and, as all true belief ends in practice, hear obediently. That which we do not accept as being true can be of no service to us, especially in the economy of Divine Gracewhere everything comes to us by faithand where unbelief restrains the hand of God and keeps back the blessing. Faith, however, as I have said, must always be obedient if it is true. When you have heard the Word, put it in practice at once! What a grand close to a sermon that was after Paul had preached in the streets of Ephesus, when they brought out their books of witchcraft and made a pile of them in the street and burned them before the Apostles face! Ah, it were well if men would bring out their sins, their hard thoughts of God, their fancied self-righteousness and everything contrary to the Divine will. It were blessed preaching, and blessed hearing, if such were the resulthear believingly and obediently!   
Thirdly, hear candidly and honestly. Too many are prejudiced against the Word. Prejudiced because they do not like the preacher, though I see not why they should not accept the Truth wherever it may be found. A man would prize a jewel, though he found it on a dust heapand the Gospel of Jesus is to be valued, let who will proclaim it! Some make up their mind before they hear, that they will not receive it. This is neither honest to the Truth of God, nor to themselves. They show not wisdom, but folly here. But many will tell you that they cannot be expected to change their religion, as if they half-felt that if they were to think a little they must do so. Surely that religion that will not bear deep consideration must be a poor, poor thing! No, Sir, but hear what is to be said! Judge it by the Word of God. Judge it honestly and when you have done so, if it is not the Truth of God, cart it away to the winds! But if it is the Truth of God, then accept it and may God bless it to you! It is a pity that men are not more candid in hearing the Gospel and in applying it to themselves. How many, if they hear a Truth of God, will say, I wonder how that will suit So-and-So, and immediately cast their eyes around the place to see if Mrs. So-and-So is there and wonder how she will like it. The old Roman said, Lend me your ears, but I may saykeep your ears at home! Hear for yourselves. Constantly this process ought to be going on in the hearers mind, What has that Truth to do with me? That promiseis it mine? That threatought it to make me tremble? That cautiondoes it apply to me? That commandam I the man who ought to carry it out? Oh, for such candid, personal applications of Gospel Truth by each hearer to himself! We should then have blessed results.   
I have thus gone through three points. The fourth ishear devoutly and hear sincerely. I reckon that but little good will come of the hearing which some people give when they hear of loaves and fishes being given away. If there are so many loaves to be given away on Sunday, a certain number of poor people will be sure to be therea vile hypocrisy which cannot be too much condemned! Take heed, dear Hearers, that none of you ever hear with such low and sinister motives, but that you come to hear the Gospel as Gods voice to us and, therefore, as in Gods Presence with simple and lowly hearts, desire to know His Truth that you may sincerely live it! Never should there be mixed therewith anything so gross and carnal as that which brings some men and women to the House of God.   
Why, do not even some of you come merely because it is the custom to go somewhere, or because it looks respectable, as if the Lords own worship were to follow and honor the fashion of the day? This is all mischievous and rotten as a motive! If I did not think it were some good to me to come to worship, or that it was my duty to God to do it, do you think I would do it to please my neighbors? No! Let my neighbors please themselves! The honest, upright man in these things remembers that religion is a personal thing and that to be the mere slave of fashion and custom of others is sinful degradation!   
Oh, I beseech you, lay aside that slavery of mens fashion! And when you do listen to the Gospel, let it be with a direct and devout feeling in your soul that you have come to worship God and to hear what the Lord God shall speak to you!   
I will not stay on any one point and, therefore, pass on to observe take heed that you hear earnestly and, therefore, spiritually. Some men get no blessing from the Gospel, but who wonders that they do not? They never put their hearts into it. Oh, I think if I were this night under conviction of sin and were seeking a Savior, I would listen with all my heart and soul to the preaching of Jesus Christ! Have you not known times, some of you, when you would have stood in the aisles by the hour to hear of Christ, if perchance you might have got rid of the burden of your sins? Ah, these are the men that get the blessing! But those who are half asleep and in their minds quite asleep, are not likely to receive the Word. How can it come to them with power? What probability is there that it will, when they themselves care not whether it will or not?

And then, dear Friendscoming to the letter Ftake care that you hear feelingly, asking the Lord to make the Word cut into your souls! Those get the blessing in whom the Word plows a furrownot those to whom it is like whipping the water, no impression being made but for an instant. Oh, pray God that you may not get Gospel-hardened! Ask Him to make you tender under all threats and to keep you like a well-plowed field that is ready to receive the good seed when it is scattered upon it! Try if you can, and may Gods Holy Spirit help you to be warned under the threats, to be cheered by the promises, to be comforted by every good Word of the Lord so that, feeling the power of the Word, it may be life and salvation to you!  
Again, take heed how you hear, and mind that you hear gratefully and prayerfully. It is a privilege beyond all price to live in a land of Bibles, to be brought where the Gospel is proclaimed. Thank God for it. Do not be indifferent, lest He take the candlestick out of its place and leave you in the dark. Hear prayerfully! I wish it were a habit with you, when you get home, to take a few minutes in a quiet room and pray for a blessing upon what has been heard. We might expect to see great results if this were your constant practice, to pray after your hearingand even beforeto get the ground ready! And when the seed is sown, to rake it and water it, so that it may have congenial soil in which to take root. Ah, but how many come to hear the Gospel and then, all the way home, get into some idle company after the service and whatever Word of God might have been blessed, fails to produce any result, for the evil birds of the air have devoured the seed that fell upon such a hard highway!   
May God give you Grace to put in practice these seven hints that I have given you. Take heed how you hear. And now, lastly, there are   
III. CERTAIN OBVIOUS REASONS FOR TAKING HEED HOW YOU HEAR.   
And the first is because it is Gods Word. Not everything that I say, or that any minister says, is Gods Word. Hence you should take heed to separate between what is Gods and what is ours. But wherein we speak according to Holy Scripture, it is as much Gods Word as if God Himself spoke. And let me remind you that Gods Word, whoever speaks it, is a much more solemn matter than a kings word! Where the word of a king is, there is power, but where the Word of God is, though a boy should speak it, there is Irresistible Power! It is better for you to hear Gods Word from your fellow men than it would be to hear it from an angel, for God would have employed angels on such messages if they had been better. But because men can enter with greater sympathy into your feelings, God has not given this ministry unto angels, but has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. It is better for you to hear it from us than it would be to hear it from one who should rise from the dead, for if not, God would bid them rise from the dead and preach to you. But remember, He would not send any from the dead to preach to Dives kinsmen.   
He said, They have Moses and the Prophets: let them hear them. I will go further and say it is better for you to hear the Word of God from a poor preacher than it is to hear it from God, Himself, for men did hear it from God, Himself at Sinai, and they prayed that He would no more speak with them, for the voice was too terrible. You cannot see Gods face and live, but in tender mercy He speaks through the lips of one like yourselves, who has passed through your sinnership, has fled to Jesus and can speak from living experience. Therefore take heed how you hear, for though it is but a man that speaks, it is more than a king, or an angel, or one risen from the dead! It is, after all, the Voice of God, the King of kings, speaking through His ambassadortherefore despise it not!   
Take heed how you hear because it is most precious Truth which is proclaimedTruth which may save your soul! The only chance, my unconverted Hearer, that you have of Heaven lies in the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Do you know the story? God became Man that He might suffer what was due for human sin. And whoever trusts in Jesus Christ, the Substitute for sinners, shall be saved! If you rely simply and entirely upon Him, you shall live! Now, that is the Gospel. If ever you shall enter Heaven, it shall be through that gate. If ever you have true peace, it will be through that precious balm of Gilead. I beseech you, then, despise it not! This treasure is better than gold! No mention shall be made of coral or jewel in comparison with it. Oh, come and buy it without money and without price! But trifle not in that sacred market of a preached Gospel in which alone you can buy the salvation of your soul!   
Take heed how you hear, because it is by this Gospel that you will be judged. Paul says that Christ will judge the world and he adds, according to my Gospel. The Gospel! The Gospel! You have heard that word till you have grown sick of it, but you shall see that word pointing the sword of Justice if you despise it! When God stands and holds out mercy to sinners, if they reject it, surely their destruction shall be the more severe! Oh, my dear Hearers, if you understand the Gospel of Jesus, I beseech you to so act towards it that you may not be afraid when the big books are opened and the thundering voice of the Judge shall read out the history of your life and shall pronounce your final and eternal destiny!   
Take heed how you hear, for many who heard the Gospel once are now among the lost. Terrible reflection! These pews have held some whose spirits are now forever banished from hope! Take heed how you hear, for you may be sitting in such a seatthe successor of such an oneand you, also, may tread in his footsteps, despise the Truth of God and so die without hope!  
Take heed how you hear, for there are many nearing the end who will hear no more.   
Among the regrets that too often make dying such stern and crushing work is this, I knew the Gospel, but I did it not. I was told of Christ, but I never trusted Him. I was pressed and persuaded and prayed to give my heart up to Him, but I put off a decision until now! My last few hours have come and tis enough for me to be thinking of the pain I suffer! I have no time to think upon eternal things and do such weighty business with a God who has now come so near to me, dressed in robes of wrath! Oh, as you will prize your Sabbaths when they are over. As you will value the sermons when you cannot listen to any more of them, think well of them, now, and make this resolutionand God help you to make it in His strengththat you will never again read the Bible, or listen to Gospel preaching or Gospel talking, without the solemn desire of your whole soul that it may be made a saving blessing to you, that you may not perish while hearing the Word!   
Oh, I pray you take heed how you hear, for there are many in Heaven now who never could have been there if they had not heard the Word. And they were such as you are! Then why should not you find the way there by the same road which they, though wayfaring men, were able to tread without mistake? Children, recollect that   
*Many dear children are gathering there, For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

There are children in Heaven who were saved by hearing the Word in the Sunday school, saved by listening to it from this platform when they were but boys and girls! Dear Children, may you trust Jesus and become lambs in His flock. Young men and maidens, there are multitudes of your age who are among the choristers of the skies, making eternal melody before the Great White Throne, and they came there by hearing of the name of Jesus and trusting in Him! Will you not follow them? They were taken from yousome of you remember them when they diedyou sat side by side with them in the class one Sunday, and the next Sunday they were in Heaven! Or you watched them fading slowly, like lilies broken a little at the stalk, and at last they withered. No, they withered not, except to our poor eyes, for they bloomed anew in Heaven!

Will you not bloom there, too? If so, listen to the Word of Jesus and, above all, accept it, and accept it now! Trust Him whose hands were pierced! Rest in Him whose heart was smitten with a spear! He will save you! He rejects none who yield to Himyield to Him now! And you, you men of business, tis hard work to get you away a little while from the desk and ledger, you are so absorbed and eaten up with many of the business cares of life! And you, working man, so apt to close your ears to anything about another worldyet hear me! There are merchants like yourselves and working men like yourselves who stand among the whiterobed host and rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory! They are there, and if you ask them how, they will tell you that they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! They found that precious blood by listening to the Gospel with attentive ears, and will you not be found there? Oh, what will it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? Sirs, it will be bad business if you make ten thousand pounds and forever ruin your souls! It will be hard business, you working men, if you toil on, and on, and on, bricklaying and carpentering, and I know not what besides, and yet throw away your souls, your immortal natures! I beseech you, by every grain of sense you have, and all the wits that are within your brains, be wise and trifle not with your soulsyour better part, your immortal part! As for your body, the worms will eat it, do what you may with it! But your souloh, I pray God that no undying worm may ever feed on that, but may you escape from that danger, safely be sheltered in Christ Jesus and be eternally blessed in Him!

I have given you good enough reasons, then, for taking heed how you hear, but what is needed, is not reasons, but reason, or better still Grace, the Grace of God! What is needed is not more argument, but the willingness to yield to those already felt. Oh, yield now to the saving Grace of God in Christ Jesus! Look to Him and be saved, I pray you, for Jesus sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **2 TIMOTHY 2.**

Verse 1. You therefore, my son, be strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus. This is an exhortation to everyone of us, not only to have Grace, but to be strong in it. There are many professors who as long as they are just saved, are content. We are not content with being barely alive spirituallywe do not wish to spend our life shivering with cold, but we seek after comfort as well as existenceand we seek to be in health, as well as to be in life. So should it be with the Christian. He should pray, Lord, make me strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus. Oh, that these words might be not merely an exhortation, but a Divine fiat, that as God said, Let there be light, so He may say to His children, Be you strong, and then oh, how soon shall the weakest of us leap into immortal strength!

2. And the things that you have heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit you to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. So then, there is to be a succession of teachers in the Church, and these do ill who are always speaking against the ministry of God. Timothy receives his ministry from Paulhe is to commit it to faithful men and these are to hold it in custody to teach to others. But there are some who say that all Christians should be teachers. To which we answer, if the whole body were a mouth, where is the ear? The mouth is, after all, but a vacuum. If the whole body was a mouth, there would be no body at all! If all are to be shepherds, who are to be the sheep? If all are to sow, where are we to find the ground? No, Brothers and Sisters, we must be careful to pray God to continue the ministry in our midst, for without it we miss many blessings. The same commit you to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

3. You therefore endure hardships, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. If you desire delicacy, join not the army. A soldiers calling is not to be linked with softnessand if you desire ease and comfort, join not the army of Christ, for a Christians profession and these go not together!

4. No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier. So Timothy, as a Christian minister, is to act as the Roman soldier did! It was a law in Rome that no soldier was to plead in court for another as a lawyer, or to act in business for another as a bailiff, or to have anything to do, while a soldier, with either husbandry or merchandise. And so should it be with the men of God who have to preach the Wordand every Christian, indeed! Though he meddles with common things, he is to take care that he is not entangled by them, not to be caught, as it were, as game is entangled in a net. There is a way, you know, of making the actions of common life subservient to the purposes of Divine Grace. This is the Christians businesslet him take care that he is not entangled with the cares of this life.

5. And also, if a man competes in athletics, he is not crowned except he strives lawfully. There were rules in the Grecian games. When they struck each other, the blow was not to be given except upon a certain part of the body, and if a man fought unlawfully, he could not get the prize. So there are laws, too, for the Christian ministry and also holy regulations for the great wrestling of Christians.

6. The farmer that labors must be first partaker of the fruits. This is a law. No man has any right to be a partaker at all till he has first tasted of the fruits of the field. Until we have first tasted that the Lord is gracious, we cannot effectively or properly minister the things of God.

7, 8, 9. Consider what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my Gospel. Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds. But the Word of God is not bound. See how the Apostle comforts himself! Here he is in prison, but the Truth of God is free! He sits with the chains about his wrists, but the Word of God travels from nation to nation, from continent to continent, like the free spirit that dwells in it!

10. Therefore I endure all things for the elects sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Not that the sufferings of Paul had anything meritoriously to do with the salvation of the elect, but that by his earnest striving and suffering, the word of the Gospel was brought to their hearingfaith, then, came by hearingand so they were saved.

11, 12, 13. It is a faithful saying: For if we are dead with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself. Glory be to God, the unbelief of man cannot make God break His promises! Christian, all your unbelief has not made God unfaithful to you! And Sinner, though you cast out the promises of God as being good for nothing, yet He will not therefore raise the recompense of reward, for Jesus will save others if He saves not you. He abides faithful.

14. Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. There are some Christians who want to have this exhortation given to them in these days, for they are always striving about words to no profit. Beware of these men, if you would not have your faith staggered!

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PLAIN WORDS WITH THE CARELESS

NO. 778

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 13, 1867, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGT0N.

**When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me. Luke 8:28.**

IF we understand these words to be the exclamation of the evil spirit which tormented this poor demonian, they are very natural words and one can very readily understand them, for the Presence of Christ is such a great torment to the Prince of Evil, that he might well cry out, Are you come to torment us before our time? If we would put Satan to rout we have only to preach the Lord Jesus in the power of the Spirit, for this is the Hell of devils. Hence it is that he roars so much against Gospel preachershe roars because the Gospel makes him hurt.

But if these words are looked upon as the language of the man himself, they are most extraordinary. In fact, they are so singularly mad and foolish that we can only account for them by the fact that though it was a man who spoke, yet the devil was in himfor surely none but a man possessed with a devil would say to Jesus, who alone could bless him, Depart from me! or say, Torment me not! And yet there are tens of thousands of men in this world who are saying just the same thing! Thousands of persons appear to be far more anxious to escape from salvation than to escape from eternal wrath! They avoid Heavens love with scrupulous diligence and the prayer of their life seems to be, Keep me, Lord, from Heaven! Prevent me ever being saved! Give me the full swing of my sins and let me live so as to ruin my soul!

Conduct most strange! From where comes such folly? The desire and determination of some men to destroy themselves are fixed and resolute to the last degree. Their self-hate and their suicidal avoidance of mercys thousand exhortations and entreaties are so extraordinary that, I repeat, we can only account for men being so besotted and maddened by the fact that Satan has mastery over them and leads them captive at his will.

Before I proceed to discuss the words, themselves, there is, however something to be learned from them. We may learn that a man may know a great deal about true religion and yet be a total stranger to it. He may know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God Most High, and yet he may be possessed of a devilno, as in this case he may be a den for a whole legion of devils! Mere knowledge does nothing for us but puff us up. We may know, and know, and know and so increase our responsibility without bringing us at all into a state of hope. Beware of resting in headknowledge! Beware of relying upon orthodoxy, for without love, with all your correctness of doctrine you will be as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal!

It is well to be sound in the faith, but the soundness must be in the heart as well as in the head. There is as ready a way to destruction by the road of orthodoxy as by the paths of heterodoxy. Hell has thousands in it who were never heretics. Remember that the devils believe and tremble. There are no sounder theoretical believers than devils, and yet their conduct is not affected by what they believe and consequently they still remain at enmity to the Most High God. A mere head-believer is on a par, therefore, with fallen angels and he will have his portion with them forever unless Divine Grace shall change his heart.

We learn, also, from the words of the text, that there are a great many bad prayers prayed in the world. The man said, I beseech You, torment me not. He was earnest to get Christ to let him alonevery earnest. Many, many, many well-worded prayers which have been excellent in themselves, have not had half so much earnestness in them as this. Both men and swine run hard when Satan drives them, but the best of us are slow, indeed, in going to Heaven. A sinners prayer for his own misery is often a grim and awful thing to look upon from its horrible earnestness. Yes, how often have we heard men offer prayers which it would be a very dreadful thing if God were to hear? What are oaths and blasphemies but prayers? They are prayers of the worst kind! A thousand mercies, indeed, that God has never granted the swearers prayer but has been pleased to spare him though he has often invoked curses on his own head.

Swearer, down on your knees this moment and thank the Almighty that He has not taken you at your word! If you have ever made a league with death and a covenant with Hell and have asked that God would destroy you, be thankful that He has not done so. Take that as a sign of mercy, and pray that the long-suffering of God may lead you to repentance. I hope and pray that his having spared you is with the intent that He may save you eternally.

Now we shall come to the words themselves, though we shall not take them quite in the order in which they stand. The first thing to which I shall call your attention is a mischievous misapprehensionthere are many foolish people in the world who imagine that Christ comes to torment them and that His religion would make them miserable. The second thing is a querulous question, What have I to do with You? Many, many think that they have nothing to do with religion, nothing to do with Christ, and they ask, more or less contemptuously or earnestly, as their state of mind may be, What have 1 to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God Most High?

I. First, we have to do with A VERY MISCHIEVOUS MISAPPREHENSION. It is currently thought among mankind that to receive the Gospel of Christ would be to cease to be happyto give up all joyfulness and cheerfulnessand to doom ones self to a life of melancholy. I shall argue upon that point a little, and I shall begin by admitting some things which are, frankly, to be acknowledged. An honest man, when he has espoused a cause, must not go in for it blindly but must be willing to make admissions where truth requires them, even should they appear to be dead against him.

Now, I will admit that if men will turn from their sins, the Gospel will, if it gets at their consciences, make them miserable. It will act as salt to raw wounds or as a whip to rebellious backs. There are some of you of this sort whose pictures I could easily paint so that you would know yourselves at once. I have heard of and personally known persons who have been in the habit of glaring vices, say, for instance, drunkenness, and yet they are here with remarkable regularity. They have been pleased, either with the greatness of the congregation, or else with the particular manner of the minister and they have come again and again! And there has been some kind of impression produced that they had a hankering after the best things.

They have, by-and-by, reasoned with themselves, I cannot go on as I have done and yet continue herethe man makes his knife too sharp. I must give up my sins or leave him altogether. And so, after awhile, feeling themselves rendered perfectly wretched by the sermons to which they have listened, they have given up attending the means of Divine Grace. Many and many a man has gone down those steps under the columns in front, yonder, grinding his teeth and stamping his feet, and vowing that he would never come again! And yet he is the very man who is sure to come again before long! I am often very glad when that is the effect produced, for I have hope of men who have enough conscience left to be irritated by the Truth of God.

Better a wrathful hearer than a forgetful hearer! If the arrow irritates, let us hope that it has gone deep. I admit, then, I must admit it, that if men are resolved to keep their sins it will be a very uncomfortable thing for them to hear about Christ Jesus, and holiness, and happiness, and sin, and the wrath to come. Jesus Christs coming near them in the preaching of the Gospel will torment impenitent sinners and make them feel alarm and terror which they will try to drown by opposing the Truth.

Why, in the old Methodist times when they took John Nelson and impressed him to make him a soldier, they said, Take the fellow away! Why, a man cannot nowadays get comfortably drunk, nor swear a round oath but what there is some Methodist cant or other who is sure to reprove him! Just sowherever true religion is in the world it makes sinners sin uncomfortable. The Christian is a standing rebuke to the ungodly! A man who is honest, and sober, and decent, and chaste, and who lives as a Christian should live is such a rebuke to the wicked that if they cannot burn himand perhaps they would like to do so in these times, yet, if they can but ignore him, or insinuate that he is a hypocrite and that he has some sinister motivethey can, then, be a little comfortable at the service of evil and warm their hands at Satans fire.

I trust this Tabernacle will always be too hot a place for such of you as mean to indulge in secret sins and hold on to hidden wickedness. Never will I, so long as God spares this tongue, flinch from telling you of your sins, for if I did I should expect that your guilt would rest upon me and that the blood of your souls would lie at my door. O that we may have Grace to be far more faithful even though your approbation should turn to rancor! Yes, admit it if you mean to go to Hell! Then you need not come to hear the Gospel because your doing so will only make you uncomfortable in this world and be of no service to you in the next.

Again, I must make another admission, namely, that a great many people, when they become serious for the first time and give themselves to Christ, are rendered for a time very miserable. There are some whose repentance is so exceedingly bitter that they make the very worst of company. They shun company themselves, and those who love merriment shun them. The terrors of the Lord are upon them and they are feeling the burden of sinit is no wonder that a cloud hangs over their brows!

We read John Bunyans life and we cannot but admit that for years he was rendered, by religion, as wretched a man as he well couldand many others have passed through just that same state of mind, some for days, some for months, and others even for years. But allow me to remind you that this is not at all the fault of our Lord Jesus Christ, for if these people had come at once to Him and obeyed the great Gospel command, Believe and live, they would have had instantaneous peace! Did you note that verse in the hymn which was given out just now? It told us that no preparations were needed before coming to Jesus. I will quote it again

*This fountain, though rich, from charge is quite clear. The poorer the wretch, the more welcome here! Come needy, and guilty, come loathsome and bare; You cant come too filthy, come just as you are.*

Now, if a soul will but cast itself at once upon the glorious work of the great Redeemer, it shall then and there be saved. If those who were so long in soul trouble had but come to Christ, and had trusted Him with all their sins about them, they would have had peace at once! And the reason why they were so long a time in misery was because they did not go to Jesus Christ but kept on looking to themselveslooking for this feeling and that good action, and that other experienceand dreaming that because they did not see these, they could not be saved. O that they had accepted at once the simple Truth of God that, the blood of Jesus Christ, Gods dear Son, cleanses us from all sin.

Now, if a man is under a physicians care and he has a medicine sent to him, if he should be months in getting well you cannot blame the physician if you find that the medicine stands untasted upon the mantel! Why the man has been trying 20 other things and he has only gotten worse and worse. It is a good thing that he wishes to be healedbut how much better would it be if he would but try the right medicine which alone can cure him? If he does not try the prescription it is not the fault of the physician if he is long a suffererit is his own fault!

Even so, if a man will not believe in Jesus, blame not the Master if he finds no salvation. O, poor troubled hearts, you need not go that roundabout way of sorrowtempted and tossed about, and tormented with a thousand doubts and fearsthere is a far nearer and surer way to eternal life! If you come to Jesus Christ straightway and fall down before the Cross, and rest your soul simply there, you shall find joy and peace this very nightbefore you go to your rest you shall know that you are accepted in the Beloved.

But even if this pain were necessary, notice thisis it not a very small cost to payto be rendered wretched for a little time if afterwards there shall come perfect peace, and if, especially, as the result of that there shall be eternal salvation in the world to come? Why, supposing a part of your foot has become diseased and a bone has to be taken out. You do not say, Oh, but the surgeon cuts so deep, and he has to use so many dreadful tools! Of course he has, but if he can save the limb, or preserve your life, nobody thinks of a little pinch so long as his life is preserved! Ah, if you had to stand waiting for Jesus at Mercys gate in the cold with the hailstorm of wrath pelting you for ages upon ages, it would be a small thing to endure if you might afterwards enter into the rest which remains for the people of God! Even on that computation the thing is a good bargain, and he that is wise will reckon the cost to be little enough.

But now that I have admitted this, I want to ask those who say that Jesus Christ would make them miserable a question or two. I have admitted a great dealnow be fair and open with me in return. You are afraid of being made miserable. Are you so mightily happy, then, at the present moment? You are afraid that if you became a Christian you would be melancholy. Now, tell me, are you so wonderfully full of joy at the present moment? Are you so marvelously happy that you are afraid of damaging your little paradise? Excuse me if I say that I rather question whether those Elysian fields of yours are so very delightful! I have my doubts about those charming pleasures of yours and suspect them to be more paint than reality.

Ah, my Friends, we little know the miseries of the wicked. Take the drunkard, for instancewhat a jolly, genial fellow he is! Yes, but what does Solomon say? Who has woe? Hear that word again, Who has woe? Why, this man whom the world calls such a jolly fellow has woe because he tarries long at the wine and mingles his strong drink. If men were rational, none of them would take the drunkards woe for the drunkards mirth. There is no comparisonhe has a dear price, a heavy penalty to pay for all his apparent joy. Rare old cordials turn out to be blue ruin and fine sparkling wines end in darkness and death!

It is so with all vicesthey froth a little and then turn to wormwood the dregs of which all the wicked of the earth shall drink. Who does not know that the penalty of fleshly vices is too horrible for us to describe? A man cannot sin without bringing upon himself some sorrow even in this life. Wretchedness follows at the tail of transgression. Do not tell me a working man who spends his money at the gin palace, or the beer shop can have a happy home. The woman who gads about here and there, visiting this and that place of pleasure and amusement and neglecting her family does not find it all happiness. I am sure she does nother face is evidence to the contrary. Those who lie, and cheat, and swear and forget GodI am quite sure they do not find so much joy as they profess to have.

So, then, to make short work of the business, you who whine about religion as being melancholy are generally a set of hypocrites! So come here, Sir, and let me tell you a little plain truth. Why, you pitiful creature! You tell me that religion would make you melancholy when you are as melancholy, now, as you can pretty well live! You have looked after this excitement and that to try and forget yourself! And when you sit down when you are sober and calculate what you are, and where you are going, you know very well that nothing could make you much more miserable than you are, and you are about as dull now as you could be! Do not make this mighty fuss about religion making you miserable when you are miserable already! But, like a sensible man, find no fault with what you have not tried.

There is another question I would like to ask you, and that is, if you reply that you are happy now, I should be glad to know whether the present happiness which you enjoy, or say you enjoy, will last you very long? The leaves are now falling very rapidly from the trees and they remind us that we, too, must die. Will your mirth and your jollity support you in your dying hour? Do you expect that these things will buoy you up amidst the chill waves of the black sea of Death? No, you admit that all your rare jollity must end thenwell, is not this a poor prospect for a dying pillow? Is this a wise choice, to choose to die without a hope? And after deathwhat then?

Will your present worldly delights minister comfort to you in another state? Do you expect that the gaieties and vanities of life, in which both rich and poor indulge, will be a comfort to you in looking back upon them when your soul is separated from your body, and you stand before the bar of God? And if you die unsaved, and God condemns you, driving you from His Presence, do you think that the merriment of the ballroom, the theater, and the drinking bar will, in their remembrance, yield drops of water to your burning tongue in eternity? Will these things be pillows for your aching head in Hell? Will the sinful joys of earth breathe the soft breath of consolation upon you when Christ has said, Depart, you cursed?

You know very well they will not! Listen to me, then. These joys of yours which you are so afraid of losingthey are but bubbles and they burst. They are mere childs toys and you break them and have done with them. And you yourself will soon be where no more bubbles are blown and no more toys made to sport with! Do not, therefore, make so much noise about your joythere is nothing in it. Sirs, you might throw your joys to the dogs and even they would refuse them! The joys that a man can know apart from Christ are unworthy of an immortal beingthey are unsatisfactory, delusive, and destructive. And if the religion of Christ does take all such joys from you, it only removes from you mischiefs which you ought to be most glad to lose.

But now we will go farther in dealing with this mischievous misapprehension. You have a notion that if Jesus Christ should come into your heart you would have to give up your pleasures. Now, what pleasures? The pleasures of the hearth and family fireside? The pleasures of seeing your children growing up around you to call you blessed? The pleasures of doing good? The pleasures of discharging your duties as in the sight of God? The pleasures of a quiet conscience? The pleasures of knowing that you can look both your fellow men and your God in the face? None of these pleasures will Christ take away from you! The pleasure of having a good hope as to the hereafter? The pleasure of having a good friend to whom to tell all your troubles? The pleasure of going to your heavenly Father with all your griefs and sorrows? None of these will Jesus take away!

Nor can I conceive of any pleasure that is worth calling a pleasure, which a man will lose by becoming a Christian. Ah, yes, I know what you mean! You mean that you will not be able to go after your sins! Now I understand you! Why did you not say so before and call a spade a spade? Call your sins, sins, but do not call them pleasures! And learn that the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, are but Satans baits by which he takes souls upon his hook to their destruction. You shall lose no pleasure but that which is unhealthy, unfit for your soul, unsatisfactory in itself, and unworthy of your nature. If you come to the Cross you shall find of a truth that, Religion never was designed to make our pleasures less. It multiplies our truest and purest pleasures a thousand-fold.

Oh, you say, but I shall have to give up my liberty! Your liberty? In what respect? Your liberty to be honest and to be upright? Your liberty to love your neighbor? Your liberty to be kind to the unthankful and the ungenerous? Your liberty to go about doing good? Your liberty to search, and judge, and know for yourselves? You will have to give up none of this in becoming a Christian! In fact, I dare to tell you that you will have a liberty conferred upon you far more wonderful than any liberty which you as yet have known. He is the free man whom the Truth of God makes free, and all are slaves besides.

Jesus Christ gives a man such an independence of spirit that he fears no one, but does what is right actuated by the spirit of right within him. And then he goes through the world fearless of oppressors, dauntless and courageous under all circumstances, the Lords free man. You will not have, then, to give up your liberty. Yes, I know what you meanyou mean liberty to sin, that is to say, liberty to ruin yourselves! Thank God that liberty will be taken from you, for you never had any right to possess so terrible an engine of destruction! But it shall be so taken from you that you yourself will be glad to miss it.

Why, look at that swine, yonder, wallowing in the mirea miracle transforms it into an angelhas not that angel liberty to go and wallow in the same filth as before? Certainly he has! But does he ever use it? No, it is contrary to his seraphic nature to be found reveling in mire. So will it be with you. You will not care for those things which are now your delight, but, being made free from sin you will count it foul scorn to serve it any longer. Oh, it will be no loss of liberty, but the unloosing of all your bonds! Still you say, If I were a Christian it would make me melancholy! What for? Why should it make you melancholy? Make you melancholy to think that, if you live, God will be your Shepherd, and you shall not want? Make you melancholy to think that when you die

*Jesus can make your dying bed feel soft as downy pillows?*

Make you melancholy to believe that you are on the way to Heaven, and that when the trials of this poor life are over you shall be with Jesus forever? I cannot imagine it! Let not Satans lies deceive you. It will drive your melancholy most effectually away if Jesus Christ comes into your soul.

Now, I will put a few things to you, with the deepest earnestness, for I long to see you turned from your evil ways and saved by the Sovereign Grace of God. O that the Holy Spirit may press home upon you the arguments which I try to use! You have heard the story of the Savior who came from Heaven to earth to die for His enemies. Do you believe that He came to make us miserable? Can you look into the face of that Man who bled for sinners, that they might live, and believe that He came here with the malevolent design of making men wretched? You know better! In your heart you know better!

There must be joy in that which such a man works outso gracious a Redeemer must intend our best happiness. Listen to His teachings and I will ask you, then, whether they tend to make anyone miserable? Point me to a precept where the Savior bids us cease to rejoice. I invite you to find in the Word of God a commandment against sober, solid, pure, holy joy! I will find you words like these, Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Rejoice you in that day, and leap for joy. What day? A bright day? No. When they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.

He began His first sermon with the word, blessed, and He repeated the word many times. And as He was at first, so He was at the last, for He was blessing His disciples when He ascended into Heaven! He came into the world that His teaching might make men blessed, both here and hereafter. I will ask you again whether you notice in His followers any particular misery. Some of them, through sickness, may be sad, and there may be some who profess to be Christians who have not enough religion yet to make them happy. But the most of us are a happy people. I will bear my witness, and speak for myself. I believe I have a spirit which delights in happiness and that I am not, naturally, one of the dullest of mankind. I am not conscious, now, of being anything but simply honest in what I am about to say, and I can assure you that nothing has ever given me such joy as the knowledge that Jesus Christ is mine.

I have had to suffer a great deal of pain lately. And nothing has assisted me to bear its sharpest twinges, and they have been sharp, indeed, like the thought that

*His way was much rougher and darker than mine.*

I tell you, young men, you who want to see life, you must see Christ! You who want to have true happiness, a happiness to rise up and to sleep with, a happiness to live with and to die withnot the happiness of those silly butterflies that fly from flower to flower and are never content except they are in the theater or the ballroombut the happiness of a man that is worth calling a manI tell you such solid happiness is to be found only in vital godliness! I am of the same mind as the poet Young, who said

*A Deity believed is joy begun.   
A Deity adored is joy advanced.   
A Deity beloved is joy matured:   
Each branch of piety delight affords.*

God is my witness, I lie not, there is a joy to be found in knowing Christ which all this round world beside cannot be foundsearch it through and through! O that you had hearkened to My commandments! Then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.

One thing I will also say and then have done with this point. You really believe that religion is a happy thing, though you pretend you do not. You must confess, and you do confess, that you desire to die like a Christian. You like for the present, perhaps, to indulge in this folly and that iniquity, but you would like to die with Christ, would you not? Then if you would be like a Christian in death, you must be like a Christian in life. You have down deep in your heart, even though you may deny it, a consciousness that faith in Jesus is worth having and that it would be worlds better for you if you were converted and had the Holy Spirit dwelling in your hearts.

Now, do not check that thought. Do not, I pray you, quench that inward consciousness. Believe it, for it is true, and oh, may you tonight, by Divine Grace, be led to seek the Savior! And may you find Him before you give sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids. My longing for you is that you may be saved! My heart bleeds over the prospect of your eternal ruin. O that you may be led to Jesus! May you trust your soul in the hands of Jesus who was crucified, and you shall find that He does not torment you, but is comfort, fullness of comfort to your spirit.

II. My time flies by me all too rapidly and I shall need all there is left for the second point, which is A QUERULOUS QUESTIONWhat have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God Most High? What have I to do with You? This is a question which we have heard many times. Poor people often ask it. I heard a workman say, Well, I have nothing to do with religion. I know it is all very well for my master, for parsons and fine ladies, and aristocrats and old womenbut it is of no use to me. I have to work hard and I have a family to bring upit has nothing to do with me.

Now give me your hand, my good fellow, and, believe me, you are quite mistaken. Why there is nobody in the world whom it has more to do with than it has with you, for the poor have the Gospel preached to them. Jesus Christ sends His Gospel especially to those who labor and are heavy laden. Moreover, I do not know anyone who could need it more than you do, for you have not very much in this life to cheer or comfort you. It is a hard fight to get through this world at all in times like these. But if you have a good hope for the next world to help you in the battles of this life, then you will bear your trials and you will cheerfully endure the hardships which heavenly wisdom appoints for you.

There are a great many working men and their wives here tonight who are members of this Church, and I know if they were to stand up for the purposeand hundreds of them couldeach one of them would tell you that the best inheritance they have ever had has been an interest in Christ, and that they never found themselves so truly blessed as when they laid hold on eternal life and trusted in Jesus! It has everything to do with you working people! I love you and I long that you may believe this great Truth of God and put it to the test.

But very often the wealthy say, What have we to do with You? Lavender kid gloves and the Gospel are not always well agreedthe upper circles are none the nearer Heaven because of their imaginary elevation. There are also certain learned gentlemen who are instructed in metaphysics and philosophy who patronizingly inform us that the restraint of religion is a very proper thing to keep the working classes in some kind of order, but really, they, themselves, are several degrees above it. Thus they say, as plainly as they can, What have I to do with You? Ah, the greatest fools in the world are those who despise other people, and they certainly do this who say that a thing is good enough for others, but quite unworthy of such excellent people as themselves! Who are they that they should lift up their heads so high?

God has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. And I reckon that that which is good for the poorest dustman, with his bell, is also good for the richest nobleman with his stars and garters. And that which may be a blessing to the most ignorant will also be a blessing to the most learned. O my Brethren, educated, refined, wealthy, as you may bethe Gospel of Jesus has everything to do with you! The giant minds of Milton and of Newton found ample room in the Gospel! They delighted to bathe, like leviathan, in the ocean of Divine Truth. Speak of philosophy? There is nothing so philosophic as the doctrine of the Cross of Christ! And as to metaphysics, if a man shall delight himself in these, he shall find arm room and elbowroom enough in the study of the Doctrines of Grace!

Here the stoutest champions of logic may meet each other in the arena of debate. Here is room for the most profound erudition. And if you should study till you know all things, yet shall you find that the knowledge of Christ Jesus surpasses all knowledge, and that His Cross is the most excellent of sciences. There is much to do with you, you great ones! May Grace bow your necks to the yoke of Jesus!

What have I to do with You? say this and that individual in this vast assembly. There may be many here who are saying, Religion has nothing to do with me. But, young woman in your beauty, religion will add a new charm to your attractions, an unfading luster such as nothing besides can yield! The knowledge of Christ Jesus shall give you a beauty of mind that shall last when the worm has furrowed that fair brow, and your wellfashioned form has dissolved into the old brown dust which is the residue of all living. Young man with all your manhood about you, full of life and spirit, Jesus Christ has much to do with you! He can make you more manly than you otherwise would have been. He can bring out the noble points of your character and educate you to be something more than school or university can make you.

And you who are in business, this will help you in your cares. You who have to toil, and slave, and bear the troubles of lifeJesus Christ will comfort and sustain you. And you gray-headswho can need Jesus Christ more than you? Here is your staff, your dying pillow, your immortal rest. What has He to do with you? Why, I trust that you have much to do with Him, and if you have not, yet at least He has something to do with you which I will now show you. What have you to do with Christ? There are two or three matters in which all of you have to do with Christ, whether you will or not, and the first is thisit is because of His intercession that you are alive tonight.

Your tree brought forth no fruit, and the Master said, Cut it down. Why, then, does it stand? Why? Because the Husbandman said, Spare it yet another year. Shall that tree ungratefully say, What have I to do with the Husbandman, when it owes itself to Him? Ah, Friend, the Jesus whom you despised has interposed and lifted His pierced hand between you and the sword of Justice or your body would at this hour have been in the grave, and your soul would have been tormented in the pit! You have something to do with Him, then. Feel you no motions of penitence at the thought? Does not the Spirit of God lead you to honor the Author of your continued existence?

Again, you have this to do with Christ: that it is entirely owing to Him that you are now in a place where the Gospel can be proclaimed to you! O Sinner, there could have been no hope, no Gospel hope for you if Jesus had not died! What balm would there have been in Gilead, what physician there, if Jesus had not come from Heaven to save? The fact that you are able to hear me say, and that I am able to say it, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be savedthat fact you owe to Christ! Otherwise, if we had met together it would only have been to remind each other that we were under Gods curse, and that when this life was over we should go to a world of misery. Now we hear the silver trumpet sounding with the love notes of the heavenly invitation, Come to the banquet of mercy, you lame, and halt, and blind! The chief of sinners may come, and, if they trust in Jesus, they shall be saved! But were it not for the Crucified Son of the highest, no note of hope could reach the ears of the guilty!

I remind you, further, that if you ask, What have I to do with Christ? the time is hastening when that question will receive a most conclusive answer. At the Last Great Day, if you have nothing to do with Him as a Savior, you will have to appear before Him as Judge. The days of Divine Grace will then be over. The Great White Throne will be set in the heavens and a congregation infinitely greater than any we have ever seen will be gathered around that dreadful tribunal. All men must put in a personal appearance at the last assize, and each one will hear his final sentence. Ah, you cannot escape! You cannot hide yourselves from the eye and hand of the Judge! The mountains refuse to bow their heads to cover you, and the rocks will not open their flinty heart to receive you!

The eyes of fire find you out, and the voice of thunder says, I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink. Because I have called, and you refused, I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded. Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. We

must have to do with Christ. You may get away tonight or any other night, and go into the haunts of sin and say, I will not be followed by the arrows of the Gospel, but the arrows of Justice will surely overtake you! You may escape from the Savior, but you will rush into the arms of the Judge! You may fly from your Friend, but you will only make Him your enemy. You may waste your life in neglecting Him but the next life will never end, and your neglect shall bring upon you a remorse which can never know an alleviation.

What have I to do with You? The question is invested with great solemnity! Dear Hearer, trifle no longer. Weigh well the question we have been considering and never venture to ask it again! Shall I tell you, before I close, what Jesus Christ may have to do with you and what He has to do with many now present who have trusted Him? It would be a thousand mercies, and a thing to sing of in Heaven, if some who came in here utterly careless tonight should go away impressed. I am so thankful to be able to preach to you again in the evening. I thank God I am able to be here. I thirst and pant to be at my solemn but beloved work again. I am so glad to be again employed by my Lord as the means of warning and entreating poor sinners. I thought I could not better show my thankfulness than by seeking the conversion of some who are farthest away from seriousness.

I do hope many of the people of God have been praying that a blessing may come. My own soul keeps praying as I speak. O that the Lord may hear me! I may have some here who have never heard the Gospel before, and others who have only dropped in out of curiosity. May this be a word in season to such. Some of us were once as careless, as godless, as hopeless and as sinful as any of you can be, and Jesus Christ has had this to do with usHe showed us our lost estate! He broke our hearts and then He bade us look to Him! Oh, happy day when we did so! We saw Him, by faith, hanging on the tree and we believed that He had suffered there for us. We rested our souls upon what He had done and ever since that day, instead of saying, What have I to do with You? we have felt that we have everything to do with Him!

He washed us from our sinsour sins could never have been taken away from us by any other means. He clothed us with His righteousness we have no other righteousness to wear than that which He has worked out and brought in. Since we have been brought into fellowship with Him we have found it to be our pleasure to be obedient to His commands, our privilege to believe His promises, our joy to plead His name at the Mercy Seat, our transport to have converse with Him, and our delight to expect the time when we shall be like He, and shall see Him as He is. You are no judges of what the Christian knows of enjoyment if you are not Christians yourselves! You can no more judge of spiritual delights than a horse in a field can judge of the pleasures of the mathematician or the astronomer. You have not the nature that qualifies you for it.

There is another world inside this world, another life within this life, and no one knows it but the man who has believed in Jesus. But, having believed in Jesus, thousands of us who are not enthusiasts nor fanatics bear our witness that Jesus Christ is so precious that if men did but know Him, they must love Him! If you did but know what delight it is to be a Christian, you would blame yourselves that you have lived so long without being one, too. If you could but know the sweetness of having Christ to be yours, you would not wish another hour to pass over your heads before you could say, Christ is mine.

The way to have Christ is to trust Him. There is life in a look at Jesus. There is nothing for you to do, nor even to feel, but simply to come just as you are and trust Jesus. This is the Gospel, He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. Baptism is the outward expression of your faith. You are immersed in water to signify that you believe that you are buried with Christ, and that you rise again to life in Him. But the saving matter is the believingthe trusting is the great soul-saving Grace. Baptism follows as a test of obedience, and a means of refreshment to the soul. He that believes on Him has everlasting life. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.

This night, eternal Father, give your Son to see of His souls travail. This night, we beseech You, grant that some may no longer reject Your Son, but may the eternal Spirit, who can plead as we cannot, work effectually with the wills and consciences of men and compel those to come in who, up to now, have stood outside, that Your House of Mercy may be filled. The Lord answer the desire of our hearts, for Jesus sake. Amen.

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A WELCOME FOR JESUS   
NO. 2593

A SERMON   
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, OCTOBER 23, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, JUNE 17, 1883.

**And it came to pass, that when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received Him, for they were all waiting for Him. Luke 8:40.**

THE Revised Version is, in some places, though not in many, better than the Authorized Version. Our text is one of the few instances in which there is an improvementAnd as Jesus returned, the multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him.

We have already noted, in our reading, that our Lord had gone where He was not welcomed. He went across the Sea of Galilee to the country of the Gadarenes and there He met with an ill reception and was even entreated by the people to depart out of their coasts. Yet, although Jesus knew beforehand the treatment He would receive there, He went. He did not stay there long, but He remained long enough to effect a grand purpose of Grace. Upon His landing on that inhospitable shore, a poor creature, held in captivity by a legion of demons, was set free and, that done, the Master yielded to the unwise, ungracious, unkind request of the Gadarenes and went His way back across the sea.

The Lord Jesus Christ may still come to a family that does not want Him, does not wish to have Him. A man of God may pass that way and tarry for a night. The Gospel itself may be carried to people in a certain quarter and they may hear it, though they have no wish to do so. Well, if this is your feeling, my Hearers, do not be burdened with what you consider the great calamity of Christ coming near you! Do not be disturbed by the fear that you will be forced to be saved against your will! The Lord Jesus Christ will not stay where He is not wanted. As He bade His Apostles, when they were persecuted in one city, to flee to another, so He does Himself. If He is not received here, He will go elsewhere. Yet I trust that, at least, He will not leave your family, that He will not leave your ungodly neighborhooduntil He has won from it some trophy of His Graceuntil He has taken one of a city, and two of a family, to bring you to Zion.

He still delights to gather to Himself unruly ones whom He will tame, unclothed ones whom He will robe in the garments of righteousness, and demon-possessed ones whom He will cause to sit at His feet, as the Gadara demoniac did when he was restored to his right mind. I have seen this happen again and again, and it has been a blessed thing for those whom Christ has thus rescued and saved. He has gone away, at the request of those who did not wish for Him, yet He has not gone till He has left behind Him a witness to His power who has continued, after His departure, to tell what the Lord has done for him! Thus a tree has been planted which Satan cannot pluck up and a light has been kindled which all the powers of darkness cannot blow out! Yet, alas, there are still some who do not want Christ and who treat Him so ill that He goes away from them, as He returned from the coasts of Gadara.

But now look at the other side of the narrative and learn from it that while some will not receive Christ, there are others who are anxious that He should come to them. When Jesus took ship and crossed over to the other side of the sea, the multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him. Minister of Christ, servant of the Lord, if you are rejected in one place, you shall be received in another! If, today, you have to shake off the dust of your feet against impenitent hearers, it may be that, tomorrow, you shall find some whose hearts the Lord has opened, who will gladly receive your message, who will come to Christ and find salvation in Him. What a mercy it is that all ground is not stony ground! There is yet some honest and good ground. It is not everywhere that the door is shut, so that Gods servants cannot enter, but, in many places, an abundant entrance is made by the power of the Holy Spirit, and Gods servants are able to step in. Wherever Christ is welcomed, there we may expect to see His power displayed.

As we read the chapter, we saw that it was so in this instance. The people waited. The people welcomed and then Christ put forth His power until the people wondered. If we are, at this time, waiting for Christ, and if we now welcome Christ, we shall, by-and-by, become a wondering assembly, marveling at what the Grace of God has done among us!

I am going to divide my subject in this way. First, here is a beautiful sight. They were all waiting for Him. Secondly, here is a sure arrival. Jesus returned. The people were all waiting for Him, so He came to them. And, thirdly, here is a hearty welcome. The multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him.

I. First, then, here is A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT. They were all waiting for Him. I shall try to show you this beautiful sight in four pictures.   
I think that it is a very beautiful sight, first, to see a waiting assembly when all the people have come togethernot to hear fine music, or merely to listen to the voice of a man, but anxious to meet with God, desirous to feel the power of Jesus Christ! Happy preacher who has to address such an audience! Happy audience that has been brought into such a condition! They were all waiting for Him. Just for a minute or two look at our ordinary congregations and see if our text is true concerning them. Alas, the people are not all waiting for Jesus, for they have not all assembled at the hour of worship! A few come on time and take their seats, but it is not so with others. I am not speaking of you, my Hearers, for I exempt you from this description. You would not get in if you came late, so you do not generally attempt it, but you know how it is in many places.

Here they comedetachment of late-comers stamping up the aisle, interrupting the first prayer. Others come straggling in all through the reading of the Scriptures. Gods Word seems so contemptible in their esteem that they tramp up the aisle as if it were some unimportant book that was being read. Then comes the singing and some join in it heartily. But others do not even know what hymn it is, for they have only just arrived. And I have known some friends, in certain places, come so late that the minister had almost finished his sermonand they were just in time to go home with the congregation! This ought not to be the case anywhere and is not the case where all are waiting for Jesus. I like the thought of the good woman who said that she never went to a service late for it was part of her religion not to disturb the worship of other people. I wish many more agreed with her. Oh, how much loss of spirituality, how much loss of blessing has come by that straggling in, one by one, instead of all being assembled, waiting for the Savior with such due respect to His holy name that they would not think of being late!   
He who goes to see an earthly king is surely punctual! He would sooner wait an hour in the anteroom than keep the monarch waiting a moment. But what shall I say of those who seem as if it were a painful operation to join in the worship of God and so postpone that operation to the last possible moment? That was a beautiful sight in the house of Cornelius the Centurion, when he had fetched in all his kinsmen and near friends before Peter arrived, so that he could say to the Apostle, Now, therefore, we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded you of God. They were all there, all ready, all waiting, all prepared to hear and all glad to hear! The more of such congregations there are, the more will the Spirit of God work, the more numerous will be the converts and the more will Christs Kingdom spread among men!   
I say all this because I know that there are many people from other places who are worshipping with us and I know, also, from observation, how many there are who look upon the House of God as a place into which they may stray at any time they please. Let it not be so with you, dear Friends, wherever you worshipbut let it be said of you whenever Christ comes to the congregationThey are all waiting for Him.   
A second picture, more beautiful, still, is to see a Church waiting for the Lord Jesus Christa prayerful congregation met together to seek a revival of religion through the more manifest Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in their midst. I wish that all the members of churches that are in a declining state would say to themselves, This state of things will never do. We cannot endure this dullness and deadness. Or, if the whole church will not say it, it would be a great mercy if some dozen or score of faithful men and women would meet together and say, We cannot bear to have these Sabbath services and weeknight meetings without any converts. Month after month passing and no additions to the Church, no apparent power with the Word. I would not wish them to meet together to censure, to criticize, or to pour out their common complaints, but I would have them gather distinctly to wait upon the Lord in prayer, pleading His promise, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.   
I think I see such an assembly as that, all earnestly pleading with the Lord, all surrounding the Mercy Seat, laying hold of strong arguments from the Word and pleading them before God. I watch them as they have separated and gone homethey are still praying and they will meet together, again, at the first opportunity. And with more tears and greater urgency, they will present the same earnest cry, Return unto us, O Lord Jesus! Return, we beseech You, O God of Hosts! Look down from Heaven and behold, and visit this vine and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, and the branch that You made strong for Yourself! O Shepherd of Israel, the drought has been long, the pastures are dry, the very earth is parchedwe entreat you to fill the clouds with rain and water us with Graceand make our barrenness to depart and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. In imagination, I see these people coming together week after weekfrequently pleading alone, and then pleading in company, making the Mercy Seat at the family altar to echo the same cryand then, after they have prayed, they are all waiting, men and women and children, saying, When will Jesus come? They are hoping that there will be better preaching and that their fellow church members and especially that they, themselves, may be more spiritual. They are looking about the congregation to see whether there are any tokens of converts or anxious souls. They are all on the alert, expecting an answer to their prayers and, therefore, waiting for that answer and ready, as soon as God sends the fruit, to gather it from the tree and store it up!   
Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we shall see greater things than these if we once get into that blessed condition, so that it can be said of us, They were all waiting for Him. If we have such Prayer Meetings as that tomorrowwhich is our day of special prayer in connection with the College Conferencewhat a day of prayer it will beall with one accord in one place crying for the blessing! We might expect to have another Pentecost to make our hearts leap within us with gratitude and praise to God. They were all waiting for Himoh, what a lovely sightlovely in the eyes of angels and of the angels Master, to see His people all waiting for Him!   
Now for the third beautiful picture which is, a seeking sinner waiting for Christ in confession and prayer. He is upstairs in the quiet of his own room. No one but God sees him, for he has taken care to shut the door. He is kneeling at his bedside. He says little, but he weeps much. He cannot utter many words, but his heart is breaking with his longing desire after Christ. He confesses his unworthiness. He knows that if Jesus of Nazareth passes by and lets him still remain in darkness, he deserves it. He bows his head low before the Lord and cries, I have sinned. After a while, he begins to plead the promise, You have said, Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. Lord, I come to You! I am waiting for You! Come to me! Mark his struggling faith. He says, Lord, teach me how to believe, and let me know what it is to trust You! Gladly would I do so. I hope I do. Lord, I believe; help You mine unbelief! Still more fervently he cries, Lord, give me rest! Lord, come and take away the burden of my sin! Lord, I beseech You, shine upon me! Now, for weeks, I have cried to You. When will You come to me? Lord, these many months have I bowed at the foot of Your Cross and I have tried to look up, but, as yet, I see no light. Possibly, it is my ignorance that hides You from my eyes. Maybe it is my unbelief. Perhaps it is some sin I am still harboring. If so, Lord *The dearest idol I have known,   
Whatever that idol be,   
Help me to tear it from Your Throne,   
And worship only Thee.*   
I said it was a beautiful sight that I was going to describe to youand so it is. Yet there are, in such a scene, sighs and groans, and tears, and sobsand men who love the pleasures of the world flee from it. But angels stand gazing with their finger on their lips and when, at last, they break the silence, the holy ones whisper, one to another, Behold, he prays. And then their next word is, Let us up and away to tell the bright spirits before the Throne of God, for this man that prays is not far from the Kingdom, and we must bid them rejoice with us over one sinner that repents. Oh, that there may be many such among us! These will be precious gems in the crown of King Jesus! While many a boastful professor shall be passed by, the humble seeker who is waiting for Christ shall have his name recorded on the tablets of the Redeemers heart!   
Now one more picture, that of a departing saint, longing for Home such a picture as you will make, I hope, dear Friend, by-and-bysuch a picture as I hope to make when my turn shall come. The battle is fought and the victory is won forever! The man is propped up in his bed with pillows, for life is fast ebbing and strength is failing him. You can hear him say, in short broken sentences, I have waited. I have waited. I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord! I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait and on His Word do I hope. Why are His chariots so long in coming? His friends step very softly across the room. It is so quiet and still that you can hear the clock tick. He is waitingwaiting for his Lord, while in his inmost soul he is singing   
*My heart is with Him on His throne,   
And ill can brook delay.   
Each moment listening for the voice,   
Rise up, and come away.*   
He has closed his eyes. He is gone. It is all over in this world. He has entered into his rest. Thus Jesus comes to those that wait for Him.   
I would begin to wait for Him now, dear Brothers and Sisters, while yet in health and strength. Wait and watch for the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which is the joy and hope of His whole Church! Wait and watch for the opened Heaven, for the descent on Olivet on that day when He, who was seen to go up into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as He went up! And if you fall asleep before that wish of yours shall be fulfilled, yet this shall be your joythat you were among those who watched and waited for your Lord, and you shall enter into His joy!   
Thus have I set before you the picture in four panels which my minds eye sees in the last words of our textThey were all waiting for Him.   
II. Now let us turn to the second point, A SURE ARRIVALJesus returned. Men never wait in vain for Christif they are truly waiting for Him, He will come to them. How do we know this?   
Well, we infer it, first, from the fact that His Spirit is there already. Brethren, are you waiting for Christ? Who but the blessed Spirit of God made you wait? There was a time when you would have been like the Gadarenes and would have asked Him to depart from you. But now the longing, the pining, the fainting, the swooning are all proofs of His Spirits work within you. Where His Spirit is, there Christ will surely be. Indeed, He is there by His Spirit. He never set a soul hungering without intending to feed it with the Bread of Life. He never made a spirit thirst without meaning to fill it with the Water of Life. You can be sure that if you are waiting for Him, He will come to you, for His Spirit is already with you.

Next, we know that He will come because His heart is there. If ever there is a heart that wants Christ, Christ wants that heart! If you have only one grain of desire towards Christ, Christ has a mountain of desire towards you. There never was a sinner yet who had a head start on Christif there is one who is waiting for Christ, He is there already! I tell you, my waiting Brother or Sister, Christ looks upon you with the deepest sympathy. He knows all your desires. He even finds music in your groans! He bottles up your tears, for He sees beauty in every sorrowful drop that distils from your eyes. Be of good courage, for, if you desire Him, He also desires youand where Christs heart is, He Himself will be, before long! If His Spirit is working within you and His heart is already with you, He will surely come to you.   
I also know that He will come because His work is there. I expect to find you, tomorrow morning, dear Brother, where your work is. My Sisters, I expect to find you in the house where your work is. Where, then, is Christs work but in longing, anxious, breaking hearts? What does Christ do? According to the Psalmist, beside all His other work, He does two thingsHe counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names. And, wonder of wonders, at the same moment, He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds. Our Lord Jesus is just as much at home in binding up wounds as He is in guiding starsthese two works are equally pleasing to Himno, the latter is the choicer work of the two. So then, if you are waiting for Him, He will surely come to you, for His business lies your way. He has work to do in you.   
This is not all. He has given us His promise that He will come. They that seek Me early shall find Me. That is a promise which refers to the young, but it refers to the old, too. If they are seeking Him with such earnest longing that they seek Him early in the morning, or seek Him at once, they shall surely find Him. for everyone that asks, receives, and He that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks, it shall be opened. These are our Lords own words, so He will not let you wait for Him in vain, you may depend upon that! His promise tells you so.   
Besides that, there is an experience which many of us have had which we would like to tell you for your encouragement. It is Christs custom to come to waiting souls. I can speak for many Brothers and Sisters here, as well as for myself, when I say that, I sought the Lord and He heard me. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him. I was so foolish when I was seeking the Savior that, for a long time, I said to myself, The Lord Jesus will hear my brother. He will hear my sister. He will be gracious to my father and my mother, but not to me. The devil said, Your name is not on the roll of Christs redeemed ones. How did he know? He had never read it. How could I tell? I had never seen it. When any man says to me, Suppose I am not elect, I usually answer, Suppose you are. And suppose both you and I leave off supposing and go to work upon certainty instead of supposition. Is not that a wise thing to do? Now, Christ has said, Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. Will not the wisest thing for us to do be to go and see whether He will cast us out? And, dear Friends, if He does cast any one of you out, I should like you to let me know of it, for I have gone up and down the land, these many years, telling everybody that Christ never did cast a sinner out and I do not wish to say what is not true. If He does cast out one who comes to Him, I shall have to amend my testimonyat least I shall have to stay at home and hold my tongueif you can tell me, assuredly, that you went to Christ and He cast you out!   
Sirs, I tell you that there is not, even among the damned in Hell, a single one who dares to say that he sought the Lord, and the Lord would not be found of him! There never shall be one among lost spirits who shall dare to say, I trusted in Christ and He did not save me. I sought Him, but He would not look upon me. It cannot be so! Come along with you, then, I pray you, and end all questions and supposing by humbly casting yourself down at Jesus feet and trusting in Him! You shall not die, but shall live forever and ever!   
Thus have I spoken upon a sure arrivalChrist will come to those who wait for Him   
III. Now, lastly, those who have waited for Christ are sure to give Him A HEARTY WELCOME when He does come. I know that for certain because many things will lead them to do so.  
First, their fears. You know that at the time mentioned in our text, the people came down to the shore of the Sea of Galilee and waited, and watched, and looked everywhere for Christ. He was gone. He who had fed them was gone. He who had healed their sick was gone. They said, one to another, Which way did He go? And the answer was, He sailed across the sea and there was a storm that nightand He has not come back. They may have said, Perhaps He never will come back. And some of the Galileans may have sadly added, Alas, we did not treat Him well when He was here. We did not honor and reverence Him as we ought to have done and now, possibly, we shall never see Him again. Among them was that poor woman with the issue of bloodand she would say, Ah, if He does not come back, then I cannot be healed. I have not a penny left to spend on another doctor! And if I had, I would probably only get worse instead of better. There was Jarius also, the ruler of the synagogue, and he was asking, Where is the great Prophet? Do you think He will come back? My dear little girl, my only daughter, is getting worse and worse. I fear she is dying. Would God He were back, for He might heal her! If He does not return soon, she will be dead before He comes. And then what shall I do?   
Then there was the poor paralyzed man who had four friends who promised that they would get him to Christ somehow or other, even if they had to pull the roof off the house. They meant to take Him to Jesus. As he lay there, he seemed to say, Ah, me, I have my bearers willing to carry me into His Presence, but perhaps He will never come back! Perhaps He has gone away altogether. Now, whenever that fear comes into a mans mind, through long waiting for Jesus, till he says, Perhaps He will not come! Perhaps He will never smile upon me. Perhaps He will never hear my prayerwhen Jesus does appear, how gladly He is welcomed! From many a heart and lips goes up the cry, He comes! He comes! Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord. Among the waiting ones who are sure to welcome Christ when He comes are those who have been troubled by fears concerning His absence.   
Then, besides, their hopes made them welcome Him when He did come. The poor woman with the issue of blood said, If He does come, perhaps I may be healed, so I hope He will return. And Jarius cried, Oh, if He will but come in time, my dear child may yet be spared! And the poor paralytic said, If He will but comeif I may but hear the music of His footfall and listen to the charm of that dear voice, and look into those loving eyes, I may yet be restored! So, when Jesus did return, the hopes of those who had been waiting for Him caused their hearts to dance within them and made them give Him a hearty welcome! Ten thousand million welcomes are due to the Savior who breeds such bright hopes within our spirits! Oh, if He comes to you, my Friend, how welcome He will be! How gladly will you receive Him! If any of you have no fears and no hopes concerning Christ, God have mercy on you! But such as have the fears and the hopes of which I have been speaking will be sure to welcome the coming Christ.   
In addition to hopes and fears, there were many other things that made these people welcome Jesus. For instance, their prayers. When a man has long prayed for Christ, he will at last say, with the Psalmist, My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. And this kind of prayer creates within the spirit such a thirst that when the fresh waters of Christs Presence flow, then does the man welcome Him with unbounded

joy! And their faith, too, helped them to welcome Christ when He returned. When a man is truly trusting Christ and yet has no sensible realization of His Presencewhen a man is really reposing upon Christ and yet does not, at the time, feel the comfort of full assurancewhen at last Christ comes to Him and fully reveals Himself in all His preciousness and beauty, how heartily does such a man welcome his Lord and Savior!

And their love, also, helped these people to welcome Christ. And O, my Soul, what joy it is to you to get into Christs company now that you have learned to love Him! My Brothers and Sisters, this is our Heaven below, is it not? In all the vehemence of our love which burns like coals of juniper, the Presence of Christ is most welcome to us. Oh, for but one glimpse of His eyes, for He has ravished our heart! Oh, but to hear the tinkling of the bells upon our High Priests garments, though the sound is soft and low! Oh, to listen to but one Word of His! If He will but whisper, You are Mine, it will lift our heart up almost to Heaven, itself, and fill it with a foretaste of the bliss of Glory! I know that it is so with you, Beloved. In proportion as you trust Him and love Him, will be the heartiness with which you will welcome Him when He comes to you!

In closing my discourse, let me say that if we are prepared to thus welcome Christ, He is sure to come to us. There never was a man yet who stood waiting to welcome Jesus, but Jesus was already on the way to Him. Shall I tell you how you may sooner bring Him to you than by any other means in all the world? Expose your wounds and sores before Him! Unveil your poverty and wretchedness before Him and challenge His promise to heal and save just such sinners as you are! Never try, in order to attract Christ to you, to make yourself appear better than you arethat is poor policy and is sure to fail. If I were a wounded soldier on the battlefield, I think that I would try to appear quite as bad as I really was, so that the surgeon might attend to me at once. Certainly, it would be very foolish for a man who is sick, well-near unto death, to say to the doctor, Leave me alone for a while; I can wait a little longer. No, rather let him cry, O Sir, I must be attended to at once, or I fear that it may be too late! I am so ill that unless I am speedily cared for, death will claim me for its own.

Well, now, act in this fashion with regard to Christ. Go to Him, poor Sinner! Tell Him how bad you have beenyou cannot aggravate or exaggerate your sin! Just lay it all open before Him and say, My Lord, my sins are the mouths that shall plead with Your love. My misery is the eloquence that shall entreat Your mercy. I die if You do not, in pity, look upon me and forgive me. I have no other hope but in Yourself. I cast myself upon You. Lost or saved, I will trust in You. At the foot of the Cross I will perish, if I must perish anywhere. Ring the bells of Heaven, for that soul is saved! Glory to God in the highest! On earth there is peace between that soul and its Maker, for it is trusting in the Redeemer, and none ever perish who trust in Him! The Lord thus bless you, dear Friends, for Christs sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:   
**LUKE 8:26-56.**

Verses 26, 27. And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He went forth to land, there met Him out of the city a certain man which had devils for a long time, and wore no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. To what a frightful state of wretchedness this poor creature was reduced by Satanic power! Yet he is only a picture of the state of mind into which many are brought through sin. They seem as if they could not live with their fellow men. They have grown so mad through sin, so utterly beyond restraint, that they can scarcely be endured in ordinary society. Yet, as Christ healed this man, so He is equal to the cure of the worst case of spiritual and moral disease that may be brought before Him!

28. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with You, Jesus, you Son of God most high? I beseech you, torment me not. See, the devil can make men pray against themselves, and this is what they do in common profane swearing when they imprecate all manner of curses upon their eyes and limbs. Ah, me! To what mischief and folly and misery can Satan drive his willing dupes!

29. (For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he broke the bonds, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness). Such cases have we often seenyoung men who have been rescued from a course of vice and who have been, for a season, helped towards virtuebut they have broken loose again. There was no holding them in. They had not learned self-restraint and no one else could restrain them

30, 31. And Jesus asked him, saying, What is your name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep. So, you see, dear Friends, that devils can pray! They besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep. That is, to their place of torment in Hell. They would sooner go to the bottom of the sea than go to their own dreadful home and, if we are half as wise as devils are, we shall dread beyond all things to be driven there. May God grant that no soul among us may ever lift up his eyes in torment and find himself in that awful deep!

32, 33. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought Him that He would allow them to enter into them. And He allowed them. Then went the devils out of the man and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were drowned. Our proverb says, They run hard whom the devil drives. And when once he begins to drive men or swine, there is no end to their running till they are drowned in the deep! Woe unto that man, then, who yields himself up to the tyrant master! Oh, seek the Grace that will enable you to fling him off, to never to come under his dread sway again! Better still, pray the blessed Prince of Peace to cast out the black prince of Hell and Himself to rule over your spirit, soul and body!

34. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled and went and told it in the city and in the country. Sometimes Christ worked cures which were scarcely mentioned. But hereand I only remember a second miracle at all like itthat of the withering of the barren fig treeHe worked a miracle of judgment and it caused a great stir and much talk. I have heard of bells at sea that only ring out in the roughest storms. Here is one that was heard when softer tones would not have been heeded They fled and went and told it in the city and in the country.

35 *.* Then they went out to see what was done and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. There was some clothing work done that day. I know not who provided the garments, but here was some real practical Christianity exhibitednot only by the Master in healing the demoniacbut by the friends who found clothing for this poor man. You do well, my Sisters, who set yourselves to help to clothe the poor. God grant that all of them may not only be clothed, but also be led to sit at the feet of Jesus!

36, 37. They also which saw it, told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart from them. Surely, this legion of demons must have had the same effect on them as on the poor man when Christ first came to him! These foolish people took up the same cry as the poor demoniac! The whole multitude besought Him to depart from them. Christ sometimes hears this kind of prayer. There is many a man who has entreated that his conscience might not be troubled any more and it never has been troubled again. But what an awful prayer for any people to pray! The whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart from them.

37-39. For they were taken with great fear: and He went up into the ship, and returned back again. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought Him that he might be with Him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to your own house, and show what great things God has done unto you. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done unto him. Sometimes, it is better to be spreading the good news of the Gospel than to be sitting at Jesus feet. It is best when we can do both, but, sometimes, the practical duty of serving our fellow men must take the first place. Happy are they who give themselves to this work, telling to others what God has done for them!

40-46. And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received Him: for they were all waiting for Him. And, behold, there came a man named Jarius, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus feet, and besought Him that He would come into his house: for he had only one daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay dying. But as He went the people thronged Him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind Him and touched the hem of His garment: and immediately her issue of blood stopped. And Jesus said, Who touched Me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng You and press You, and You say, Who touched Me? And Jesus said, Somebody has touched Me; for I perceive that power is gone out of Me. Here are we, tonight, dear Friends, a great crowd. And what multitudes of professed worshippers of God there are in many places! They seem to throng the Savior, but, ah, how few do really touch Him so as to derive healing power from Him! This humble, simple touch of faith is something above and beyond all the pressure of professed zeal and ardor! This touch Christ recognizes at once, but all the pressing and the squeezing of the crowd goes for nothing.

47. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately. Here is a second confessor. First, there was a man healed. Now, here is a woman healed. Both sexes may now hear from them what Christ can do. If they will not believe, oh, then their unbelief is sad, indeed!

48, 49. And He said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole; go in peace. While He yet spoke, there came one from the ruler of the synagogues house, saying to him, Your daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. As if such a suppliant really did trouble Him! Still, if you have been praying long and your case appears to be hopeless, Despair will whisper, Trouble not the Master. But Christ is never troubled by our prayers! It is our lack of prayer that troubles Him. Even after the worst has come to the worst, we shall never trouble Him if we continue our prayers. But if, on any account, we cease from them, then, indeed, is His heart grieved.

50. But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, Fear not: only believe, and she shall be made whole. If she is actually dead, she shall be raised to life again.

51. And when He came into the house, He suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. For Christ does not make a parade of His miracles! He loves to do His work quietly and they that make a great noise must mind that they do not get put out when Christ is about to work a cure.

52-55. And all wept, and bewailed her: but He said, Weep not, she is not dead, but sleeps. And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and He commanded to give her meat. Young saints need feeding as soon as they are converted. The conversion may be by miracle, but they will need to be fed by ordinary means. Be ready, dear people of God, with your milk for those who are but newly born! He commanded to give her meat.

56. And her parents were astonished. But He charged them that they should tell no man what was done. For Jesus did not wish, at least at that time, to have the story of His miracles blazed abroad. Of Him the Prophet had long before written, He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench.

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CURED AT LAST!   
NO. 2018

**DELIVERED ON LORDS DAY MORNING, APRIL 8, 1888, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind Him and touched the border of His garment: and   
immediately her issue of blood stanched.   
Luke 8:43, 44.**

THOUGH I take Lukes statement as a text, I shall constantly refer to the version of the same story which we find in Mark 5:25 to 29. Here we have one of the Lords bid onesa case not to be publicly described because of its secret sorrow. We have here a woman of few words and much shamefacedness. Her malady subjected her to grievous penalties according to the ceremonial Law. There is a terrible chapter in the Book of Leviticus concerning such a case as hers. She was uncleaneverything that she sat upon and all who touched itshared in the defilement. So that, in addition to her continual weakness, she was made to feel herself an outcast, under the ban of the Law.

This created, no doubt, great loneliness of spirit, and made her wish to hide herself out of sight. In the narrative before us she said not a word until the Savior drew it out of her, for her own lasting good. She acted very practically and promptly but she was a silent seekershe would have preferred to have remained in obscurity, if so it could have been. Some here may belong to the great company of the timid and trembling ones. If courage before others is needed to secure salvation, matters will go hard with them. They shrink from notice and are ready to die of shame because of their secret grief.

Cowpers hymn describes their inward feelings, when it says of the woman   
*Concealed amid the gathering throng   
She would have shunned your view,   
And if her faith was firm and strong,   
Had strong misgivings too.*

Such plants grow in the shade and shrink from the light of the sun. The nature of their sorrows forces them into solitary self-communion. Oh, that the Lord may heal such at this hour!

The immediate cure of this woman is the more remarkable because it was a wayside miracle. The Savior was on the road to restore the daughter of Jairus. This womans healing was an extra portion of Divine Grace, a sort of over-splash of the great fountain of mercy. The cup of our Lords power was full, full to the brimand He was bearing it to the house of the ruler of the synagogue. This poor woman did but receive a drop which He spilt on the way. We do well if, when going upon some errand of love, we concentrate all our energy upon it and do it well in the endbut the Savior could not only perform one great marvel but He could work another as a sort of by-play incidentallyI almost said accidentally, on the road.

The episodes of the Lord Jesus are as beautiful as the main run of His lifes poem. Oh, that this day, while my sermon may seem meant for one and distinctly directed to his salvation, it may also, by the power of Jesus, save another not so clearly pointed at! While the Word is aimed at one particular character, may the Lord cause the very wind of the Gospel shot to overcome anotheror, to change the figure for a better one, while we spread the table for some bid guest, may another hungry soul have Divine Grace given him to take his place at the banquet of Grace! May those who hide away and whom, therefore, we are not likely to discover, come forth to Jesus and touch Him and live!

Let us at once speak of this much-afflicted woman, for she is a typical character. While we describe her conduct and her cure, I trust she may serve as a mirror in which many tremblers may see themselves. We shall carefully note what she had done and then what came of it. This will lead us on to see what she did, at last, and what we, also, should do. May the Holy Spirit make this a very practical discourse by causing you to follow her till you gain the blessing as she did! The preacher is very weak. And may the Lord, for this very reason, work by him to your salvation.

Consider, therefore, concerning this woman, WHAT SHE HAD DONE. She had been literally dying for twelve years. What had she been doing? Had she resigned herself to her fate, or treated her malady as a small matter? Far from it. Her conduct is highly instructive.

First, she had resolved not to die if a cure could be had. She was evidently a woman of great determination and hopefulness. She knew that this disease of hers would cause her life to ebb away and bring her to the grave. But she said within herself, I will have a struggle for it. If there is a possibility of removing this plague it shall be removed, let it cost me what it may of pain or payment. Oh, what a blessing it would be if unsaved ones here would say each one for himself, I am a lost soul. But if a lost soul can be saved, I will be saved. I am guilty. But if guilt can be washed away, mine shall be washed away. I have a hard heart and I know it. But if a heart of stone can be turned into a heart of flesh, I long to have it so and I will never rest until this gracious work is worked in me!

Alas, it is not so with many! Indifference is the rule. Indifference about their immortal souls! Many are sick with dire spiritual disease but they make no resolve to have it cured. They trifle with sin and death and Heaven and Hell. Insensibility has seized upon many and a proud conceitthey are full of sin, and yet they talk of self-righteousness, they are weak and can do nothingyet they boast of their ability. They are not conscious of their true condition and hence they have no mind to seek a cure. How should they desire healing when they do not believe that they are diseased? How sad that beneath the ruddy cheek of morality there should lurk the fatal consumption of enmity to God!

How horrible to be fair without and leprous within! Are there not many who can talk freely about religion and seem as if they were right with God and yet in the secret of their hearts they are the victims of an insincerity and a want of the Truth of God which fatally undermines the life of their profession? They are not what they seem to bea secret sin drains away the lifeblood of their religion. May the Holy Spirit show every unregenerate person the fatal nature of his souls disease. For this, I trust, would lead to the making of a firm resolve to find salvation, if salvation is to be had.

No doubt some are held back from such action by the freezing power of despair. They have reached the conclusion that there is no hope for them. The promises of the Gospel they regard as the voice of God to others but as having no cheering word for them. One might suppose that they had searched the Book of Life and had made sure that their names were not written there. They act as if their death warrant had been signed. They cannot believe in the possibility of their becoming partakers of everlasting life. They are under a destroying delusion, which leads them to abandon hope. None are more presumptuous than the despairing. When men have no hope, they soon have no fear. Is not this a dreadful thing? May the Lord save you from such a condition!

Despair of Gods mercy is an unreasonable thingif you think you have grounds for it, the lying spirit must have suggested them to you. Holy Scripture contains no justification for hopelessness. No mortal has a just pretense to perish in despair. Neither the nature of God nor the Gospel of God, nor the Christ of God, warrant despair. Multitudes of texts encourage hope. But no one Scripture, rightly understood, permits a doubt of the mercy of God. All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. Jesus, the great Healer, is never baffled by any disease of human naturehe can cast out a legion of devils and raise the dead. Oh that I could whisper hope into the dull ear of yonder mourner! Oh that I could drop a rousing thought into the sullen heart of the self-condemnedhow glad should I be! My poor desponding Friend, I would gladly see your chains snapped, your fetters broken off! Oh that the Spirit of God would cause you, like this woman, to resolve that if there is healing for your soul you will have it!

Alas, many have never come to this gracious resolution because they cherish a vain hope and are misled by an idle dream. They fancy that salvation will come to them without their seeking it. Certainly they have no right to expect such a thing. It is true that our Lord is found of them that sought Him not. But that is an act of His own sovereignty and is not a rule for our procedure. The plain directions of the Gospel are, Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. How dare they set these gracious words aside? They fancy that they may wake up one of these fine days and find themselves saved. Alas, it is more likely to happen to them as the rich man in the parable, In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.

God grant that none of you may trifle your souls into such misery!

Some fancy that in the hour of death they may cry, God be merciful to me a sinner, and so may leap into salvation. It seems to them a very slight business to be reconciled to God. They imagine that they can be

converted just when they will and so they put it off from day to day, as if it were of no more consequence than going to shop to buy a coat or a gown. Believe me, the Word of God does not set forth the matter in this way. It tells us that even the righteous scarcely are saved and it rouses us to strive to enter in at the strait gate. God save you from every false confidence which would prevent your being in earnest about the healing of your souls.

Spiritually, your case is as desperate as that of the poor woman now before us. May the Lord sweetly constrain you to feel that you must be healed and that you cannot afford to put off the blessed day! If beneath the firmament of Heaven there is healing for a sin-sick soul, seek it till you find it. When the Lord brings you to this resolve by His good Spirit, you will not be far from the kingdom of Heaven.

Let us next note that this woman, having made her resolve, adopted the likeliest means she could think of. Physicians are men set apart on purpose to deal with human maladies, therefore she went to the physicians. What better could she do? Though she failed, yet she did what seemed most likely to succeed. Now, when a soul is resolved to find salvation, it is most fit and proper that it should use every likely means for the finding of salvation, Oh that they were wise enough to hear the Gospel and to come at once to Jesus! But often they make grave mistakes. This woman went to gentlemen who were supposed to understand the science of medicine. Was it not natural that she should look for help to their superior wisdom?

She cannot be blamed for looking to the men of light and leading. Many, in these days, do the same thing. They hear of the new discoveries of professedly cultured men and hear their talk about the littleness of sin and the larger hope and the non-necessity of the new birth. Poor deceived creatures! They find in the long run that nothing comes of it. For the wisdom of man is nothing but pretentious folly. The world by wisdom knows neither God nor His salvation. Many there are who know less of the saving Truth of God because they know so much of what human fancy has devised and human search discovered. We cannot blame the woman that, being a simple soul and anxious for healing, she went to those first who were thought to know most. Let us not, with Christ so near, go roundabout as she did but let us touch our Lord at once.

No doubt the sufferer also tried men who had diplomas, or were otherwise authorized to act as physicians. How can you blame her for going to those who were in the succession and had the official stamp? Many sinsick souls nowadays are, at first, very hopeful that the ordained clergy can benefit them by their duly performed services and duly administered sacraments. At least, good men, eminent in the Church, may be looked to for aidsurely these know how to deal with souls! Alas, it is vain to look to men at all, and foolish to depend on official dignity, or special repute. Some teachers do not know much about their own souls and therefore know less about the souls of others.   
Vain is the help of man, be the man who he may. Whatever his popularity, learning, or eloquence, if you seek him for his prayers, or his teachings, as able to save you, you will certainly seek in vain. As this poor woman didshe is not to be blamed but to be commended, that she did what seemed best to her, according to her light. But you are warnedgo not, therefore, to men.

No doubt she met with some who boasted that they could heal her complaint at once. They began by saying, You have tried So-and-So but he is a mere quackmine is a scientific remedy. You have used a medicine which I could have told you would be worthless. But I have the secret. Put yourself absolutely into my hands and the thing is done. I have healed many that have been given up by all the faculty. Follow my orders and you will be restored. Sick persons are so eager to recover that they readily take the bait which is offered them by brazen impudence. An oily tongue and a bland manner, backed with unblushing assurance, are sure to win their way with one who is anxious to gain that which is offered.

Ah, me, All is not gold that glitters. And all the professions which are made of helping sin-sick souls are not true professions. Many pretenders to new revelations are abroad but they are physicians of no value. There is no balm in Gilead. There is no physician thereif there had been, the hurt of the daughter of my people had long ago been healed. There is no medicine beneath the sky that can stay the palpitations of a heart which dreads the judgment to come. No earthly surgery can take away the load of sin from the conscience. No hand of priest or presbyter, Prophet or philosopher, can cleanse the leprosy of guilt. The finger of God is wanted here. There is one Heal-all, one Divine Catholicon and only one.

Happy is he that has received this infallible balm from Jehovah Rophi the Lord that Heals. Yet we marvel not, that when souls are pressed down with a sense of guilt, they try anything and everything which offers even a faint hope of relief. I could wish that all my hearers had an intense zeal to find salvation. For even if it led them into passing mistakes, yet, under Gods blessing, they would find their way out of them and end by glorifying the Divine Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which never fails.

This woman, in the next place, having resolved not to die if a cure could be had and having adopted the likeliest means, persevered in the use of those means. No doubt she tried many and even opposite remedies. One doctor said, You had better go to the warm baths of the lake of Tiberius such bathing will be comforting and helpful. She grew worse at the warm bath, and went to another physician who said, You were wrongly treated. You need bracing up in the cold baths of the Jordan. Thus she went from vanity to vanity, to find both of them useless. An eminent practitioner assured her that she needed an internal remedy and he alone could give her an infallible receipt.

This, however, was of no use to her. And she went to another who said that an external application should be tried, such as Isaiahs lump of figs. What perseverance that woman must have had! I am not going to say anything about our doctors nowadays, no doubt they are the most learned and skillful that can bebut in earlier times surgery was murderous and

medicines were poisonous. Many of the prescriptions of those days are sickening and yet ridiculous. I read yesterday a prescription, of our Saviors time, warranted to cure many diseases which consisted of grasshoppers eggs. These were supposed to exercise a marvelous influence but they are no longer in the list of medicines.

The tooth of a fox was said to possess special powers. But I noticed that one of the chief drugs of all, the most expensive but the surest in its action, was a nail from the finger of a man who had been hanged. It was important that he should have been hangedanother fingernail might have had no efficacy. Poor creatures were made to suffer most painfully by cruel medicines which were far worse than the disease. As for surgical operations, if they had been designed to kill, they were certainly admirably arranged for their purpose. The wonder is that for twelve years poor human nature could stand out, not against the disease, but against the doctors.

Brethren, the case is much the same spiritually. How many, under their burden of sin, go first to one and then to anotherpractice this and agonize after that and pine for the otherperseveringly and still without avail! Travel as fast as you may in a wrong direction you will not reach the place you seek. Vain are all things save Jesus our Lord.

Have you been to Doctor Ceremony? He is, at this time, the fashionable doctor. Has he told you that you must attend to forms and rules? Has he prescribed you so many prayers and so many services? Ah, many go to him and they persevere in a round of religious observances but these yield no lasting ease to the conscience. Have you tried Doctor Morality? He has a large practice and is a fine old Jewish physician. Be good in outward character, says he, and it will work inwardly and cleanse the heart. A great many persons are supposed to have been cured by him and by his assistant, Doctor Civility, who is nearly as clever as his master. But I have it on good evidence that neither of them apart, nor even the two together, could ever deal with an inward disease.

Do what you may, your own doings will not stanch the wounds of a bleeding heart. Doctor Mortification has also a select practice. But men are not saved by denying themselves until they first deny their selfrighteousness. Doctor Excitement has many patients but his cures seldom outlive the sunset. Doctor Feeling is much sought after by tender spirits. These try to feel sorrow and remorse. But, indeed, the way of cure does not lie in that quarter. Let everything be done that can be done apart from our blessed Lord Jesus Christ and the sick soul will not be better. You may try human remedies for the space of a lifetime but sin will remain in power, guilt will cling to the conscience, and the heart will abide as hard as ever.

But this woman not only thus tried the most likely means and persevered in the use of them but she also spent all her substance over it. That was perhaps the chief thing in ancient surgery!the golden ointment which did good to the physician, whatever became of the patient. The most important point was to pay the doctor. This womans living was wasting away as well as her life. She continued to pay and to pay and to pay. But she received no benefit from it. You might say, rather, that she suffered more than she would have done had she kept her gold. Thus do men waste their thought, their care, their prayer, their agony over that which is as nothingthey spend their money for that which is not bread.

At last she came to her last shekel. In the end there was an end to her means. But so long as the silver lasted, she lavished it out of the bag. What would not a man give to be saved? I never wonder that dying men give their estates to priests in the hope that they can save their souls. If gold could purchase pardon, who would withhold it? Health of body, if it could be purchased with gold, would be cheap at any price. But health of soul, holiness of character, acceptance with God, assurance of Heaven these would be cheap if we counted out worlds as poor men pay down their pence for bread. There are men so mean that they would not part with a pound for a place in Paradise. But if these once knew their true condition they would alter their minds. The price of wisdom is above rubies. If we had mines of gold, we might profitably barter them for the salvation of our souls.

Beloved, you see where this woman was. She was in downright, desperate earnest to have her mortal malady healed and so she spared neither her labor nor her living. In this we may wisely imitate her.

II. We have seen what the woman had done. Now let us think of WHAT HAD COME OF IT. We are told that she had suffered many things of many physicians. That was her sole reward for trusting and spendingshe had not been relieved, much less healed. But she had suffered. She had endured much additional suffering through seeking a cure. That is the case with you who have not come to Christ but, being under a sense of sin, have sought relief apart from Him. All that you do apart from Jesus, in order to win salvation, will only cause you increased suffering.

You have tried to save yourself by prayers. Your prayers have turned your thoughts upon your sin and its punishment and thus you have become more wretched than before. You have attended to ceremonies and if you have used them sincerely, they have worked in you a solemn sense of the holiness of God and of your own distance from Him. And this, though very proper, has only increased your sorrow. You have been trying to feel good and to do good, that so you may be good. But the very effort has made you feel how far off you are from the goodness you so much desire.

Your self-denial has excited cravings after evil and your mortifications have given new life to your pride. Efforts after salvation made in your own strength act like the struggles of a drowning man, which sink the more surely. As the fruit of your desperate efforts, you have suffered all the more. In the end I trust this may work for your good, but up till now it has served no healing purposeyou are now at deaths door and all your praying, weeping, Church-going, Chapel-going and sacrament-takingdo not help you one bit. There has been this peculiarly poignant pang about it all, that you are not better. Cheerily did you hope but cruelly are you

disappointed.

You cried, I have it this time, but the bubble vanished as you grasped it. The evil of your nature, when repressed in one place, broke out in another. You dealt with the symptoms of your disease but you did not cut off the root of the mischiefit only showed itself in another formit never went away. You gave up one sin only to fall into anotheryou watched at the front entrance and the thief stole in at the back door. Up till now, O Soul, you have not come to Jesus and after all your goings elsewhere, you are not better!

And now, perhaps this morning you are saying, What can I do? What shall I do? I will tell you. You can do nothing except what this woman ultimately did, of which I will speak by-and-by. You are now brought to this extremitythat you are without strength, without merit, without power, and you must look out of yourself to anotherone who has strength and merit, and can save you. God grant that you may look to that glorious One before this service is over!

We read of this woman, that though she suffered much, she was not better but rather grew worse. No better after twelve years of medicine? She went to the Egyptian doctor and he promised her health in three months. She was worse. She tried the Syrian doctorhe was a man who had great knowledge of the occult sciences and was not ashamed to practice enchantments. She was bitterly disappointed to find herself decidedly weaker. Then she heard of a Greek practitioner, who would cure her, presto! in a instant. She paid her remaining money but she still went backward. She bought disappointment very dearly.

Friend, is this your condition? You are anxious to be right, and therefore you are earnest in every effort to save yourself. But still you are not better. You climb a treadmill and are no higher after all your climbing. You drift down the river with one tide and you float up again when it turns. Night after night you pull up in the same old creek that you started from. Oh, pitiful condition! Getting gray, toobecoming quite the old gentleman. And yet no nearer eternal life than when, as a lad, you used to attend the House of God and wish to become a child of God.

Was she better? No. She grew worse? Fresh mischief had developed other diseases fed upon her weakness. She was more emaciated, more lifeless than ever. Sad result of so much perseverance! And is not that the case with some of you who are in earnest but are not enlightened? You are working and growing poorer as you work. There is not about you so much as there used to be of good feeling, or sincere desire, or prayerfulness, or love for the Bible, or care to hear the Gospel. You are becoming more careless, more dubious than you once were. You have lost much of you former sensitiveness. You are doing certain things now that would have startled you years ago and you are leaving certain matters undone which once you would have thought essential. Evidently you are caught in the current and are nearing the waterfall. The Lord deliver you!

This is a sad, sad case! As a climax of it all, the heroine of our story had now spent all that she had. She could not go now to the Egyptian doctor, or to the Syrian doctor, or to the Hebrew doctor, or to the Roman doctor, or to the Greek doctor. No. Now she must do without their flattering unction in the future. As for those famous medicines which raised her hopes, she can buy no more of such costly inventions. This was, perhaps, her bitterest griefbut let me whisper it in your earthis was the best thing that had yet happened to her. And I am praying that it may happen to some of you. At the bottom of your purse I trust you will find wisdom.

When we come to the end of self we come to the beginning of Christ! That last shekel binds us to the pretenders but absolute bankruptcy sets us free to go to Him who heals diseases without money and without price. Glad enough am I when I meet with a man who is starved out of selfsufficiency. Welcome, Brother! Now you are ready for Jesus. When all your own virtue has gone out of you, then shall you seek and find that virtue which goes out of HIM.

III. This brings to our notice, in the third place, WHAT THIS WOMAN DID AT LAST. Weaker and weaker had she become and her purse had become lighter and lighter. She hears of Jesus of Nazareth, a man sent of God who is healing sick folk of all sorts. She hears attentively. She puts the stories together that she hears. She believes them. They have the likeness of the Truth of God about them. Oh, says she, there is yet another opportunity for me. I will get in the crowd and if I can only touch the bit of blue which he wears as the border of his garment, I shall be made whole.

Splendid faith! It was thought much of in her own day and we may still more highly prize it now that faith has grown so rare. Note well she resolved to trust in Jesus in sheer despair of doing anything else. My dear Friend, I do not know where you are sitting this morning in this great congregationI almost wish I did, that I might come up to you and say to you personally, Try Jesus Christ, trust Him and see whether He will not save you. Every other door is evidently shutwhy not enter by Christ, the Door? There is no other life buoy. Lay hold on this! Say with our poet

*I can but perish if I go;   
I am resolved to try;   
For if I stay away, I know   
I must forever die.*

Exercise the courage which is born of desperation. May God the Holy Spirit help you now to thrust forth your finger and get into touch with Jesus! Say, Yes, I freely accept Christ. By Gods grace, I will have Him to be my only hope. I will have Him now. Be driven to Jesus by force of circumstances. Since there is no other port, O weather-beaten boat, make for this One! Wanderer, here is a Refuge! Turn in here, for there is no other shelter.

After all, this was the simplest and easiest thing that she could do. Touch Jesus. Put out your finger and touch the hem of His garment. The prescriptions she had purchased were long. But this was short enough. The operations performed upon her had been intricate. But this was simplicity itself. The suffering she had endured had complicated her case. But this was as plain as a pikestaff. Touch with your finger the hem of His

garmentthat is all. O my Hearer, you have tried many things, great things and hard things and painful thingswhy not try this simple matter of faith? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Trust Jesus to cleanse you and He will do it. Put yourself into your Saviors hands once and for all, and He will save you.

Not only was this the simplest and easiest thing for the poor afflicted one, but certainly it was the freest and most gracious. There was not a penny to pay. Nobody stood at the door of the consulting room to take her guinea. And the good Physician did not even give a hint that He expected a reward. The gifts of Jesus are free as the air. He healed this believing woman in the open street, in the midst of the crowd. She had felt that if she could but get into the throng, she would, by hook or by crook, get near enough to reach the hem of His garment and then she would be healed.

It is so this morning, dear Hearer. Come and receive Divine Grace freely. Bring no good works, no good words, no good feelings, no good resolves, as the price of pardon. Come with an empty hand and touch the Lord by faith. The good things which you desire, Jesus will give you as the result of His cure. But they cannot be the cause or the price of it. Accept His mercy as the gift of His love! Come empty-handed and receive! Come undeserving and be favored! Only come into contact with Jesus, who is the Fountain of Life and you shall be saved.

This was the quietest thing for her to do. She said nothing. She did not cry aloud like the blind men. She did not ask friends to look on and see her make her venture. She kept her own counsel and pushed into the press. In absolute silence she took a stolen touch of the Lords robe. O my Hearer, you can be saved in silence. You have no need to speak to any person of your acquaintance, not even to mother or father. At this moment, while in the pew,

believe and live. Nobody will know that you now are touching the Lord. In after days you will own your faith but in the act itself you will be alone and unseen. Believe on Jesus. Trust yourself with Him. Have done with all other confidences and say, He is all my salvation. Take Jesus at once, if not with a hands grasp, yet with a fingers touch. O you poor, timid, bashful Creature, touch the Lord! Trust in His power to save. Do not let me tell you to do it in vain but do it at once. May Gods Spirit cause you to accept Jesus now!

This is the only effectual thing. Touch Jesus and salvation is yours at once. Simple as faith is, it is never-failing. A touch of the fringe of the Saviors garment sufficedin a moment she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. It is twelve years ago, she said to herself, since I felt like a living woman. I have been sinking in a constant death all this while, but now I feel my strength come back to me. Blessed be the name of the great Healer! She was exceeding glad. Tremble she did, lest it should turn out to be too good to be true. But she was most surely healed. O my dear Hearer, do trust my Lord, for He will surely do for you that which none other can achieve. Leave feeling and working and try faith in Jesus. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so at once!

IV. And now, poor convicted Sinner! Here comes the driving home of the nail. DO AS THIS WOMAN DIDask nobody about itbut do it. She did not go to Peter, James and John and say, Good Sirs, advise me. She did not beg from them an introduction to Jesus but she went of her own accord and tried for herself the virtue of a touch. You have had advising enough. Now come to real work. There is too much tendency to console ourselves by conversations with godly menlet us get away from them and speak to their Master. Talks in the enquiry room and chats with Christian neighbors are all very well. But one touch of Jesus will be infinitely better.

I do not blame you for seeking religious advicethis may be a half-way house to call at but do not make it the terminus. Press on till, by personal faith, you have laid hold on Jesus. Do not tell anybody what you are about to do. Wait till it is done. Another day you will be happy to tell the minister and Gods people of what the Lord has done for you. But for the present, quietly believe in the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. Do not even ask yourself about it. If this poor woman had consulted with herself she might never have ventured so near the Holy One of God. So clearly shut out from society by the Law of her people and her God, if she had given the matter a second thought, she might have abandoned the idea.

Blessed was the impetuosity which thrust her into the crowd and kept her head above the throng and her face towards the Lord in the center of the press. She did not so much reason as dare. Do not ask yourself anything about it. But do it. Believe and have done with it. Stop not to parley with your own unbelief, nor answer your rising doubts and fears. But at once, this instant, put out your finger, touch the hem of His garment and see what will come of it. God help you to do so while I am speaking!

Yield to the sacred impulse which is just now operating upon you. Do not say, Tomorrow may be more convenient. In this womans case there was the Lord before her. She longed to be healed at once and so, come what may, into the crowd she plunged. She was so enfeebled that one wonders how she managed to get near Him. But possibly the crowd took her off her feet and carried her onward, as often happens in a rush. However, there was her chance and she seized it. There was the fringe of the Lords mantleout went her fingerit was all done.

O my Friend, you have an opportunity now, by Gods great grace, for you are in His House of Prayer. Jesus of Nazareth passes by at this moment. He who speaks to you is not trying to say pretty things but he is pining to win your soul for Jesus. Oh, how I wish I could lead you to that saving touch! The Spirit of God can do it. May He now move you to cryI will believe in the appointed sacrifice and trust my soul with Jesus! Have you done so? You are saved. He that believes in Him has everlasting life.

Oh but I tremble so! So did she whom Jesus healed. Her hand shook but she touched Him all the same for that. I think I see her quivering finger. Poor emaciated woman, with pale and bloodless cheeks! What a ta

per finger was that which she held out and how it quivered! However much the finger of your faith may tremble, if it does but touch the hem of the Lords garment, virtue will flow from Him to you. The power is not in the finger which touches but in the Divine Savior who is touched. So long as there is a contact established between you and the almighty power of Jesus, His power will travel along your trembling finger and bring healing to your heart.

A telegraph wire may shake with the wind and yet convey the electric current and so may a trembling faith convey salvation from Jesus. A strong faith which rests anywhere but in Jesus, is a delusion. But a weak faith which rests alone on Jesus, brings sure salvation. Out with your finger, dear Soul, out with your finger! Do not go away till you have touched the Lord by a believing prayer or hope. Holy Spirit, do not suffer any to quit the Tabernacle until, by a believing desire, or trust, or confidence of some sort, they have established a contact between themselves and Jesus and have felt the virtue enter them for their instant healing.

O Lord, save this people! Why do you come, Sunday after Sunday, in such crowds? And why must I stand here and bleed my heart away in love to your souls? Is the sole result to be that I help you to spend an hourand-a-half in a sort of religious amusement? What a waste it is of my labor and of your time unless some gracious work is done! O Sirs, if you are not brought to Christ, my preaching will prove a curse to you! It appalls me to think that the preaching of the Gospel will be a savor of death unto you unless it brings you life. Put not the day of Divine Grace from you.

By the living God, I do implore you, trust the living Redeemer. As I shall meet you all, face to face, before the Judgment Seat of Christ, I do implore and beseech youput out the finger of faith and trust the Lord Jesus, who is so fully worthy to be trusted. The simple trust of your heart will stay the death which now works in you. Lord, give that trust, for Jesus sake! Amen.

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REAL CONTACT WITH JESUS   
NO. 3124

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1908. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And Jesus said, Somebody touched Me:   
for I perceived power going out from Me.   
Luke 8:46.**

[Other Sermons on the healing of this poor woman are Sermons #1809, Volume 30MAY I?; Sermon #2018, Volume 34CURED AT LAST!; Sermon #2019, Volume 34 SHE WAS NOT HID and Sermon #3020, Volume 53GOOD CHEER FROM GRACE RECEIVED Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

OUR Lord was very frequently in the midst of a crowd. His preaching was so plain and so forcible that He always attracted a vast company of hearers and, moreover, the rumor of the loaves and fishes no doubt had something to do with increasing His audiences, while the expectation of beholding a miracle would be sure to add to the numbers of the hangerson. Our Lord Jesus Christ often found it difficult to move through the streets because of the masses who pressed upon Him. This was encouraging to Him as a Preacher and yet how small a residue of real good came of all the excitement which gathered around His personal ministry! He might have looked upon the great mass and have said, What is the chaff to the wheat? for here it was piled up upon the threshing floor, heap upon heap, and yet, after His decease, His disciples might have been counted by a few scores, for those who had spiritually received Him were but few. Many were called, but few were chosen. Yet, wherever one was blessed, our Savior took note of itit touched a chord in His soul. He could never be unaware when virtue had gone out of Him to heal a sick one, or when power had gone forth with His ministry to save a sinful one. Of all the crowd that gathered around the Savior upon the day of which our text speaks, I find nothing said about one of them except this solitary somebody who had touched Him! The crowd came, and the crowd went, but little is recorded of it all. Just as the ocean, having advanced to full tide, leaves but little behind it when it retires again to its channel, so the vast multitude around the Savior left only this one precious depositone somebody who had touched Him and had received power from Him.

Ah, my Master, it may be so again this evening! These Sabbath mornings and these Sabbath evenings the crowds come pouring in like a mighty ocean, filling this House of Prayer, and then they all retire again. Only here and there is a somebody left weeping for sin, a somebody left rejoicing in Christ, a somebody who can say, I have touched the hem of His garment and I have been made whole. The whole of my other hearers are not worth the somebodies. The many of you are not worth the few, for the many are the pebbles and the few are the diamonds! The many are the heaps of husks and the few are the precious grains! May God find them out at this hour and His shall be all the praise!

Jesus said, Somebody touched Me, from which we observe that in the use of means and ordinances, we should never be satisfied unless we get into personal contact with Christ, so that we touch Him, as this woman touched His garment. Secondly, if we get into such personal contact, we shall have a blessing. I perceived power going out from Me. And thirdly, if we do get a blessing, Christ will know it. However obscure our case may be, He will know it and He will have us let others know it He will speak, and ask such questions as will draw us out and manifest us to the world!

I. First, then, IN THE USE OF ALL MEANS AND ORDINANCES, LET IT BE OUR CHIEF AIM AND OBJECTIVE TO COME INTO PERSONAL CONTACT WITH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Peter said, The multitude throng You and press You, and that is true of the multitudes to this very day. But of those who come where Christ is in the assembly of His saints, a large proportion only come because it is their custom to do so. Perhaps they hardly know why they go to a place of worship. They go because they always did and they think it wrong not to go. They are just like the doors which swing upon their hinges. They take interest only in the exterior parts of the serviceinto the heart and soul of the business they do not enterand cannot enter. They are glad if the sermon is rather short, there is so much the less tedium for them. They are glad if they can look around and gaze at the congregationthey find in that something to interest them. But getting near to the Lord Jesus is not the business they come upon. They have not looked at it in that light. They come and they go. They come and they goand it will be so till, by-and-by, they will come for the last time and they will find out in the next world that the means of Grace were not instituted to be matters of customand that to have heard Jesus Christ preached and to have rejected Him is no trifle, but a solemn thing for which they will have to answer in the Presence of the great Judge of all the earth!

Others there are who come to the House of Prayer and try to enter into the service and do so in a certain fashion, but it is only selfrighteously or professionally. They may come to the Lords Table perhaps they attend to the ordinance of Baptism. They may even join the Church. They are baptized, yet not by the Holy Spirit. They take the Lords Supper, but they take not the Lord, Himself. They eat the bread, but they never eat His flesh. They drink the wine, but they never drink His blood. They have been buried in the pool, but they have never been buried with Christ in Baptism, nor have they risen again with Him into newness of life! To them, to read, to sing, to kneel, to hear and so on are enough. They are content with the shell, but the blessed spiritual kernelthe true marrow and fatnessthese they know nothing of. These are the many, no matter into what Church or meetinghouse you enter. They are in the press around Jesus, but they do not touch Him. They come, but they come not into contact with Jesus. They are outward, external hearers only, but there is no inward touching of the blessed Person of Christ, no mysterious contact with the ever-blessed Savior, no stream of life and love flowing from Him to them. It is all mechanical religion. Of vital godliness, they know nothing.

But Christ said, Somebody touched Me, and that is the soul of the matter. O my Hearer, when you are in prayer alone, never be satisfied with having prayed! Do not give it up till you have touched Christ in prayer or, if you have not got to Him, at any rate sigh and cry until you do! Do not think you have prayed, but try again. When you come to public worship, I beseech you, rest not satisfied with listening to the sermon and so onas you all do with sufficient attention and to that I bear you witnessbut do not be content unless you get at Christ, the Master, and touch Him! At all times when you come to the Communion Table, count it to have been no ordinance of Grace to you unless you have gone right through the veil into Christs own arms, or at least have touched His garment, feeling that the first objective, the life and soul of the means of Grace, is to touch Jesus Christ Himselfand unless somebody has touched Him, the whole has been a mere dead performance without life or power!

The woman in our text was not only among those who were in the crowd, but she touched Jesus and, therefore, Beloved, let me hold her up to your example in some respects, though I would to God that in other respects you might excel her!

Note, first, she felt that it was of no use to be in the crowd, of no use to be in the same street with Christ, or near to the place where Christ was, but she must get at Himshe must touch Him. She touched Him, you will notice, under many difficulties. There was a great crowd. She was a woman. She was also a woman enfeebled by a disease which had long drained her constitution and left her more fit to be upon a bed than to be struggling in the seething tumult. Yet, notwithstanding that, so intense was her desire, that she urged on her way, I doubt not with many a bruise and many an uncouth push and at last, poor trembler as she was, she got near to the Lord. Beloved, it is not always easy to get at Jesus. It is very easy to kneel down to pray, but not so easy to reach Christ in prayer. There is a child crying, it is your own, and its noise has often hindered you when you were striving to approach Jesus. Or a knock will come at the door when you most wish to be retired. When you are sitting in the House of God, your neighbor in the seat before you may unconsciously distract your attention. It is not easy to draw near to Christ, especially coming as some of you do right from the countinghouse or from the workshop with a thousand thoughts and cares about you. You cannot always unload your burden outside and come in here with your hearts prepared to receive the Gospel. Ah, it is a terrible fight sometimesa real toe-to-toe fight with evil, with temptation and I know not what! But Beloved, do fight it out, do fight it out! Do not let your seasons for prayer be wasted, nor your times for hearing be thrown away, but like this woman be resolved, with all your feebleness, that you will lay hold upon Christ! And oh, if you are resolved about it, if you cannot get to Him, He will come to you and sometimes, when you are struggling against unbelieving thoughts, He will turn and say, Make room for that poor feeble one, that she may come to Me, for My desire is to the work of My own hands. Let her come to Me and let her desire be granted to her.

Observe again that this woman touched Jesus very secretly. Perhaps there is a dear Sister here who is getting near to Christ at this very moment and yet her face does not betray her. It is so little contact that she has gained with Christ that the joyous flush and the sparkle of the eyes which we often see in the child of God, have not yet come to her. She is sitting in yonder obscure corner, or standing in this aisle, but though her touch is secret, it is true. Though she cannot tell another of it, yet it is accomplished. She has touched Jesus! Beloved, that is not always the nearest fellowship with Christ of which we talk the most. Deep waters are still. No, I am not sure but what we sometimes get nearer to Christ when we think we are at a distance than we do when we imagine we are near Him, for we are not always the best judges of our own spiritual state. And we may be very close to the Master and yet, for all that, we may be so anxious to get closer that we may feel dissatisfied with the measure of Grace which we have already received. To be satisfied with self is no sign of Grace! To long for more Grace is often a far better evidence of the healthy state of the soul. Friend, if you are not coming to the Table tonight publicly, come to the Master in secret. If you dare not tell your wife, or your child, or your father, that you are trusting in Jesus, it need not be told as yet. You may do it secretly, as he did to whom Jesus said, When you were under the fig tree, I saw you. Nathanael retired to the shade that no one might see himbut Jesus saw him and marked his prayerand He will see you in the crowd, and in the darkand not withhold His blessing!

This woman also came into contact with Christ under a very deep sense of unworthiness. I daresay she thought, If I touch the Great Prophet, it will be a wonder if He does not strike me with some sudden judgment, for she was a woman ceremonially unclean. She had no right to be in the throng. Had the Levitical Law been strictly carried out, I suppose she would have been confined to her house. But there she was, wandering about, and she must go and touch the holy Savior! Ah, poor Heart, you feel that you are not fit to touch the hem of the Masters robe, for you are so unworthy! You never before felt so undeserving as you do at this moment. In the recollection of last week and its infirmities, in the remembrance of the present state of your heart and all its wanderings from God, you feel as if there never was so worthless a sinner in the House of God before. Is Grace for me? you ask. Is Christ for me? Oh, yes, unworthy one! Do not be put off without it! Jesus Christ does not save the worthy, but the unworthy! Your plea must not be righteousness, but guilt! And you, too, child of God, though you are ashamed of yourself, Jesus is not ashamed of you. And though you feel unfit to come, let your unfitness only impel you with the greater earnestness of desire. Let your sense of need make you the more fervent to approach the Lord who can supply your need.

Thus, you see, the woman came under difficulties, she came secretly, she came as an unworthy one, but still she obtained the blessing!   
I have known many staggered with that saying of Pauls, He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself. Now understand that this passage does not refer to that unworthiness of those persons who come to the Lords Table, for it does not say, He that eats and drinks, being unworthy. It is not an adjectiveit is an adverb He that eats and drinks unworthily, that is to say, he who shall come to the outward and visible sign of Christs Presence, and shall eat of the bread in order to obtain money by being a member of the Church, knowing himself to be a hypocrite, or who shall do it jestingly, trifling with the ordinancesuch a person would be eating and drinking unworthily and he will be condemned! The sense of the passage is, not, damnation, as our version reads it, but condemnation. There can be no doubt that members of the Church coming to the Lords Table in an unworthy manner, do receive condemnation. They are condemned for so doing and the Lord is grieved. If they have any conscience at all, they ought to feel their sin. And if not, they may expect the chastisements of God to visit them. But, O Sinner, as to coming to Christwhich is a very different thing from coming to the Lords Tableas to coming to Christ, the more unworthy you feel yourself to be, the better! Come, you filthy one, for Christ can wash you! Come, you loathsome one, for Christ can beautify you! Come utterly ruined and undone, for in Jesus Christ there is the strength and salvation which your case requires!

Notice, once again, that this woman touched the Master very tremblingly and it was only a hurried touch, but still it was a token of faith. Oh, Beloved, to lay hold on Christ! Be thankful if you do but get near Him for a few minutes. Abide with me, should be your prayer, but oh if He should only give you a glimpse of Himself, be thankful! Remember that a touch healed the woman! She did not embrace Christ by the hour together. She had but a touch and she was healed! And oh, may you have a sight of Jesus now, my Beloved! Though it is but a glimpse, yet it will gladden and cheer your souls. Perhaps you are waiting on Christ, desiring His company, and while you are turning the matter over in your mind you are asking, Will He ever shine upon me? Will He ever speak loving words to me? Will He ever let me sit at His feet? Will He ever permit me to lean my head upon His bosom? Come and try Him! Though you should shake like an aspen leaf, yet come! They sometimes come best who come most tremblingly, for, when the creature is lowest, then is the Creator highestand when, in our own esteem, we are less than nothing and vanity, then is Christ the more fair and lovely in our eyes! One of the best ways of climbing to Heaven is on our hands and knees. At any rate, there is no fear of falling when we are in that position for   
*He that is down need fear no fall.*   
Let your lowliness of heart, your sense of utter nothingness, instead of disqualifying you, be a sweet medium for leading you to receive more of Christ. The more empty I am, the more room is there for my Master. The more I lack, the more He will give me. The more I feel my sickness, the more shall I adore and bless Him when He makes me whole!   
You see, the woman did really touch Christ, and so I come back to that. Whatever infirmity there was in the touch, it was a real touch of faith. She did reach Christ, Himself. She did not touch Peter, that would have been of no use to her any more than it is for the parish priest to tell you that you are regenerate when your life soon proves that you are not. She did not touch John or Jamesthat would have been of no more good to her than it is for you to be touched by a bishops hands and to be told that you are confirmed in the faith when you are not even a Believer and, therefore, have no faith to be confirmed in! She touched the Master Himself and I pray you, do not be content unless you can do the same! Put out the hand of faith and touch Christ. Rest on Him. Rely on His atoning Sacrifice, His dying love, His rising power, His ascended plea and as you rest in Him, your vital touch, however feeble, will certainly give you the blessing your soul needs!  
This brings me to the second part of my discourse, upon which I will only say a little.   
II. THE WOMAN IN THE CROWD DID TOUCH JESUS AND, HAVING DONE SO, SHE RECEIVED POWER FROM HIM.   
The healing energy streamed at once though the finger of faith into the woman. In Christ, there is healing for all spiritual diseases. There is a speedy healing, a healing which will not take months nor years, but which is complete in one second! There is in Christ a sufficient healing, though your diseases should be multiplied beyond all bounds. There is in Christ an all-conquering power to drive out every ill. Though, like this woman, you baffle physicians and your case is reckoned desperate beyond all parallel, yet a touch of Christ will heal you! What a precious, glorious Gospel I have to preach to sinners! If they touch Jesus, no matter though the devil himself were in them, that touch of faith would drive the devil out of them! Though you were like the man into whom there had entered a legion of devils, the word of Jesus would cast then all into the deep and you would sit at His feet, clothed, and in your right mind! There is no excess or extravagance of sin which the power of Jesus Christ cannot overcome. If you can believe, whatever you may have been, you shall be saved! If you can believe, though you have been lying in the scarlet dye till the warp and woof of your being are ingrained therewith, yet shall the precious blood of Jesus make you white as snow! Though you have become black as Hell itself, and only fit to be cast into the Pit, yet if you trust Jesus, that simple faith shall give to your soul the healing which shall make you fit to tread the streets of Heaven and to stand before Jehovah-Rophis face, magnifying the Lord that heals you!   
And now, child of God, I want you to learn the same lesson. Very likely when you came in here, you said, Alas, I feel very dull. My spiritually is at a very low ebb. The place is hot and I do not feel prepared to hearthe spirit is willing, but the flesh is weakI shall have no holy enjoyment today! Why not? Why, the touch of Jesus could make you live if you were dead! And surely it will stir the life that is in you, though it may seem to you to be expiring! Now, struggle hard, my Beloved, to get at Jesus! May the Eternal Spirit come and help you and may you yet find that your dull, dead time can soon become your best times! Oh, what a blessing it is that God takes the beggar up from the dunghill! He does not raise us when He sees us already up, but when He finds us lying on the dunghillthen He delights to lift us up and set us among princes! Before you are aware, your soul may become like the chariots of Amminadib. Up from the depths of heaviness to the very heights of ecstatic worship you may mount in a single moment if you can but touch Christ Crucified! View Him yonder, with streaming wounds, with thorn-crowned head as, in all the majesty of His misery, He expires for you!   
Alas, you say, I have a thousand doubts tonight, Ah, but your doubts will soon vanish when you draw near to Christ! He never doubts who feels the touch of Christat least not when the touch lasts. For, observe this womanshe felt in her body that she was made whole, and so shall you, if you will only come into contact with the Lord. Do not wait for evidences, but come to Christ for evidences! If you cannot even dream of a good thing in yourselves, come to Jesus Christ as you did the first time! Come to Him as if you never had come at all. Come to Jesus as a sinner and your doubts shall flee away.   
Yes, says another, but my sins come to my remembrance, my sins since conversion. Well, then, return to Jesus when your guilt seems to return. The fountain is still open and that fountain, you will remember, is not only open for sinners, but for saints! What do the Scriptures say? There shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalemthat is, for you Church membersfor you Believers in Jesus! The fountain is still open! Come, Beloved, come to Jesus anew, and whatever your sins are, or doubts, or heaviness, they shall all depart as soon as you can touch your Lord!   
III. And now the last point isand I will not detain you long upon it IF SOMEBODY SHALL TOUCH JESUS, THE LORD WILL KNOW IT.   
I do not know your names. A great number of you are perfect strangers to me. It matters nothingyour name is somebody, and Christ will know you! You are a total stranger, perhaps, to everybody in this place, but if you get a blessing, there will be two who will know it you will and Christ will. Oh, if you should look to Jesus this day, it may not be registered in our Church book, and we may not hear of it, but it will still be registered in the courts of Heaven and they will set all the bells of the New Jerusalem ringing and all the harps of angels will take a fresh lease of music as soon as they know that you are born-again! *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!   
The Spirit takes delight to view   
The holy soul He formed anew   
And saints and angels join to sing   
The growing empire of their King!*   
Somebody! I do not know the womans name. I do not know who the man is, butSomebody!Gods electing love rests on you! Christs redeeming blood was shed for you! The Spirit has worked an effectual work in you, or you would not have touched Jesusand all this Jesus knows!   
It is a consoling thought that Christ not only knows the great children in the family, but He also knows the little ones. This Truth of God stands fast, The Lord knows them who are His, whether they are only brought to know Him now, or whether they have known Him for 50 years. The Lord knows them who are His. And if I am a part of Christs body, I may be but the foot, but the Lord knows the footand the head and the heart in Heaven feel acutely when the foot on earth is bruised! If you have touched Jesus, I tell you that amidst the glories of angels and the everlasting hallelujahs of all the blood-bought souls around His Throne, He has found time to hear your sigh, to receive your faith and to give you an answer of peace! All the way from Heaven to earth there has rushed a mighty stream of healing power which has come from Christ to you! Since you have touched Him, the healing power has touched you!   
Now, as Jesus knows of your salvation, He wishes other people to know of it, and that is why He has put it into my heart to say, Somebody has touched the Lord. Where is that somebody? Somebody, where are you? Somebody, where are you? You have touched Christ, though with a feeble finger, and you are saved! Let us know it. It is due to us to let us know. You cannot guess what joy it gives us when we hear of sick ones being healed by our Master! Some of you, perhaps, have known the Lord for months and you have not yet come forward to make an announcement of itwe beg you to do so. You may come forward tremblingly, as this woman did. You may perhaps say, I do not know what I should tell you. Well, you must tell us what she told the Lord she told Him all the truth. We do not want to hear anything else. We do not desire any sham experience. We do not want you to manufacture feelings like somebody elses that you have read of in a book. Come and tell us what

you have felt! We shall not ask you to tell us what you have not felt, or what you do not know. But, if you have touched Christ and you have been healed, I ask it, and I think I may ask it as your duty, as well as a favor to us, to come and tell us what the Lord has done for your soul!   
And you, Believers, when you come to the Lords Table, if you draw near to Christ and have a sweet season, tell it to your Brothers and Sisters. Just as when Benjamins brothers went down to Egypt to buy corn, they left Benjamin at home, but they took a sack for Benjamin, so you ought always to take a word home for the sick wife at home, or the child who cannot come out. Take home food for those of the family who cannot come for it. God grant that you may always have something sweet to tell of what you have experimentally known of the precious Truth of God, for while the sermon may have been sweet in itself, it comes with a double power when you can add, and there was a savor about it which I enjoyed, and which made my heart leap for joy!   
Whoever you may be, my dear Friend, though you may be nothing but a poor somebody, yet if you have touched Christ, tell others about it in order that they may come and touch Him, too! And the Lord bless you, for Christs sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOHN 3:1-21.**

[This Exposition belongs to Sermon #3121, Volume 54THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION, but there was no space available for it there.  
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Let us once more read together part of this blessed soul-saving chapter. I suppose that more souls have been saved through the reading of this chapter than through almost any other portion of Holy Writ.

Verses 1, 2. There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night. He could not have come at a better timethe business of the day was over and all was quiet.

2. And said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do except God is with him. It is always well to go as far as you can in your avowal of belief in Christ. Nicodemus confessed what he knew to be true and he drew from it the thoroughly accurate conclusion that Christ must be a Teacher come from God because of the miracles which He worked. Dear Hearer, if you do not yet fully know Christ, take heed that you do not trifle with the Truth of God which you do know. If God has taught you a little about Him, prize that little and you shall have more! As we have often said, He that values moonlight shall yet have sunlight. Thank God if you know as much as Nicodemus knewand ask Him to teach you more.

3, 4. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mothers womb and be born? Staggering at the symbol, he stumbled at the letter of Christs saying and did not perceive its inward sense.

5, 6. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Flesh, and nothing more. And it never can be anything more than flesh. The first birth brings no one any further than that. The children of the most godly parents, so far as their sinful nature is concerned, are in precisely the same condition as the offspring of the most ungodly. If they are ever to be numbered among the children of God, they must be born-again, because that which is born of the flesh is flesh.

6. And that which is born of the Spirit. And that alone   
6. Is spirit. Now, the flesh cannot enter into the spiritual Kingdom, only the spirit can enter that realm and, hence the need of a new birth, that this spirit may be created in us.   
7, 8. Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born-again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit. He is a mystery. The effect of the work of the Spirit upon him is seen in him, but no man understands what the Spirit of God is, or how He works, any more than he knows from where the wind [See Sermons #630,

Volume 11THE HOLY SPIRIT COMPARED TO THE WIND and #1356, Volume 23THE HEAVENLY WINDRead/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

comes, or where it goes.   
9, 10. Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things  
be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Are you a master of Israel, and   
know not these things? A very similar query to that might be put to some   
who are living nowAre you profound philosophers, students deeply  
learned in classic lore, or wise concerning many of the mysteries of  
natureyet know you not these things? What will be the good of all your   
knowledge if you do not know how to gain admission into the Kingdom of  
Heaven? It would be better for a man to be ignorant of all other things,   
and to know this one thing, than to have all possible human learning,   
and yet to miss this knowledge which is the most essential of all!

11. Verily, verily, I say unto you. [See Sermon #3053, Volume 53JESUS CHRISTS IDIOMRead/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]  
Christ speaks with an authority that no mere human teacher can ever possess.

11. We speak what We know, and testify what We have seen; and you receive not Our witness. In a certain sense, every true minister of Christ and every true child of God can say this, for we know that there is a spiritual Kingdom. We have seen it, we have entered into it and we can testify that there is another life which is as much superior to the ordinary life of men as the life of men is superior to that of the brutes that perish! And we know that we have that superior life. We have other eyes than these eyes that are visible, and other ears than the ears of our flesh. There is a higher and better life to be enjoyed even now, and he that believes in Christ has that life. We speak what we know and testify what we have seen, and yet, though our testimony would be believed if we gave it concerning anything else, we are not believed when we witness concerning this higher and better life!

12. If I have told you earthly things. Things that take place here below, such as the new birth.   
12. And you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things? Christ will not go on to teach us the deepest Doctrines of the Christian faith if we will not learn that which is simplest. Shall the boy be taught the classics if he will not study the spelling book? If men will not believe that there is such a thing as the new birth, shall they be taught the Doctrine of Union to Christ, and all those higher Truths of God that rise out of it? They would not believe these things if they were taught them!   
13. And no man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven. There was a nut that Nicodemus could not cracka riddle that he could not solveand the Savior left him thus puzzled, for the time being, that he might learn that unless he was taught of the Spirit, he could not understand the teaching of Christ. You and I, who have been taught of the Spirit, understand the meaning of these words, but Nicodemus did not, though he was a master of Israel. Now follows another passage of Scripture which I always rejoice to read in this Chapter. There are two great Truths revealed herethe one is that we must be born-again and the other is that whoever believes in Christ is saved. Sometimes those two Truths seem to come into conflict with one another. A man says, You say to me, Only believe, and you shall be saved. And then, by-and-by, you tell me that I must be born-again. Are both these statements true? Yes, they are both true, and they are both in this Chapter. We have been reading about the necessity of regeneration, now comes the glorious freeness of the Gospel of Christ!   
14, 15. And 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. You must be born into a new life if you are to be saved! How are you to have that great blessing? There is life for a look at Jesus Christ lifted up upon the Cross and lifted up in the preaching of the Gospel. Look to Him, then, and as surely as those who were bitten by the serpents in the wilderness were healed the moment that they looked

at the serpent of brass, [See Sermon #153, Volume 3THE MYSTERIES OF THE BRONZE SERPENTRead/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] so   
surely shall every son or daughter of Adam who gives a faith-look at the Crucified Savior, be saved at once and forever!

16, 17. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. There was no necessity for Christ to come here to condemn us, for we were already condemned by our sin! Why, then, did Jesus come? He must have come upon an errand of mercy, to bring salvation to the lost. It is even soGod sent Him for that very purpose, that He might give eternal life to as many as believe on Him. Oh, the glorious freeness of this precious Gospel! Surely they deserve the deepest Hell who will not have Heaven upon such terms! They must forever perish if they reject life when it is set before them in this truly gracious manner!

18, 19. He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation. The very first form of it, the proof of it, and the reason for itThis is the condemnation.

19-21. That light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are worked in God. Those who love their sins cannot, at the same time, love the Savior! They must love the one and hate the other and it is a terrible choice when they deliberately reject the only Savior, the Light of the world, and choose the darkness of sin, the darkness of woe, the outer darkness where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.  
END OF VOLUME 54 Sermon #2019 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SHE WAS NOT HID   
NO. 2019

**DELIVERED ON LORDS DAY MORNING, APRIL 15, 1888, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. Luke 8:47.**

LAST Sabbath morning we spoke upon the woman who was healed of her issue of blood. After having spent all her living upon physicians and being disappointed in them all, she touched the Saviors garment and was healed immediately. She came behind Him, for she did not wish to be seen. She said not a wordshe had not the courage to ask for the blessing in an open manner. When cured, she slunk away into the crowdshe was anxious to be unobserved. Now, if the story had ended here, you would not have been surprised. It was a case of extreme delicacy that might seem to require a specially secret ending by the womans being permitted to go her way home, happy and whole.

But now, suppose that in the tenderness of our Saviors sympathy with this trembling woman, He had permitted her to depart without making an open confession, what would have been the consequence? The Savior willed that the miracle should be recorded in three of the four Gospels and if it had ended where we left it last Sabbath morning, then such is our human nature that we should have drawn from it the inference that saving faith need not be confessed. Our natural love of ease and our desire to avoid the Cross would have made us follow this womans example and we should have tried to touch the Lord for healing and then run away from Him without making any profession of discipleship.

Many would have quoted her case as a reason why they might be allowed to escape the responsibilities, duties and sufferings which discipleship might involve. If the Savior had permitted this woman to retire in silence, many cowardly Believers would have said that the Saviors silence gave consent to her retiring without a word and that they might safely imitate her. I know men and their style of reasoning. This would have been fine food for them. Think how this story would have been used in times of martyrdom. The cowardly would have argued, We may have to go to prison or to the stake if we confess Christwhy should we be so needlessly daring? We can receive grace from Jesus quite unknown to anybody and having gained salvation we can mingle with the crowd and avoid exposing ourselves to danger.

The Savior would not allow us to find in this case an apology for an evil course and so He called out the woman whom He had cured. The spirit of hiding, thank God, was not found in the Church in martyr timesfor holy men and women came forward and confessed their faith with more than

common eagerness.

If the narrative had ended where we left it last Sunday, what a quietus it would have afforded to those good, peace-loving people who, in these days of blasphemy and rebuke, will take no sides at all! Anything for a quiet life. They are very comfortable and mean to remain so. What does it matter to them though the whole Church should be rotten with error? They hope to go quietly to Heavenindeed, they feel they are going there. And, if they are not soldiers of the Cross, yet they trust they are followers of the Lamb. If they do not contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, yet still they eat the fat and drink the sweet and enjoy the privileges of a comfortable religion.

That is the present policy of many and gladly enough would they have sheltered themselves behind this woman. She, however, was not hid, nor may they be. We have enough apologies for selfishness and ease and compromise, without the Saviors supplying us with one. And so He took special care in this instance that nothing so evil should be made out of it. What might have been a defense for guilty silence He turns into a grand argument for open confession. He will not allow concealment in this case because He will not tolerate it in any case but will have us take up our Cross and follow Him.

That is the subject for this morningmay I be helped of the Holy Spirit so to handle it that any here who are sincere in their love to Christ but yet have never avowed it, may be forced to come out at once and before the Lord Jesus Christ and His people declare that they have touched Him and that they have been healed immediately. Let me say to you, her hiding seemed very excusable. But, secondly, her hiding was not permitted. And, thirdly, your hiding should not be excused nor permitted but should come to an end at once.

I. First, then, we say concerning this woman, that HER HIDING SEEMED VERY EXCUSABLE. I have already said that if, in any instance, a cure might have been concealed, this was one. And it was so for many reasons. First, because of this womans natural timidity and because of the nature of her malady. It would appear that if in any case the thing might have been done in a corner, or if done in a crowd, might have been passed over without remarkthis was an evident case in point. Yet the Savior, tenderly considerate as He is, will not have it so. And you, dear Friend, may say, I am naturally so very timid and retiring, pray excuse me. This woman was not only bashful but her sickness made her rightly wish to remain in obscurity.

He should not like my story to be known, says one. She might have justly said the sameit must have been hard indeed for her to confess what the Lord had done. Yet she had to acknowledge His grace openly and so must you. She is a woman sick and faint, who for twelve years has been growing weaker and weaker, yet when she is healed she must come forward and confess the cure. Does this seem harsh to you? Surely it is the least she can do and she ought to do it of her own accord. Yet if silence might have been allowed in any case, hers was so delicate a matter that she might have had the doubtful privilege of receiving mercy without acknowledging it.

In addition to this, remember that the Savior did not court publicity. He laid no injunction upon those whom He healed that they should tell everyone of the marvel. He did not seek fame or observationHe did not strive nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. In several cases He bade the healed ones tell no man what was done. And in this case He had given the cure without any open request for it. Might she not, from this, conclude that her secret act of faith was approved and that it might continue in secret, since it had gained the benefit of healing?

You may reason in that way about yourself and say that Jesus does not need that you should testify for Him. Indeed, it is true that He does not need anything of any of us. But is this a fit way of treating your Lord? You may say that quietude on your part would be excusable. But as the Savior did not think so in this womans case, I believe that He will not think so in your case. I trust that in His mercy He will deal with you as with her and compel you to come out and own the wonders of His grace.

There was another reason why she might have thought she need not make a public confession and that was that the Savior was at that time exceedingly occupied. The multitude thronged Him and He was on the way to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, to attend to his child. She would only be stopping Him in His career of love. Should the Savior be detained for her? Already Jairus did not look upon her very cheerfully when he saw that Jesus stopped for her. What would he do if she caused a still longer delay? Besides, she might naturally argue, Why should such an insignificant person as I am detain the Prophet? What am I that I should take up even a second of His time? Jairus is before me. Let him take his turn. I have the blessing and there is no need to detain the Lord.

You know how ready we are to make excuses when a duty is not pleasantI suppose you are very handy at it yourself. But now since this excuse, if it ever occurred to the woman, was soon disposed of, I would advise you also to cast away all subterfuges and remember that it is written, He that with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved, or quoting an equally plain Scripture, He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. The faith and the confession are put together by the Holy Spiritwhat God has joined together let no man put asunder.

Excuse might also have been found for the healed woman in the fact that her cure would make itself known by its results. When she reached home, everybody would see that she was quite another person. And when they asked how it came to pass, she could tell them all about it. They would see in her life the best evidence of the work of our Lord upon her. Is it not better to speak by your life than by your lips? Exactly so and herein lies the apparent force of this excuse for disobedience. It needs seen truth to keep a falsehood on its legs. Note well that this woman was not permitted to withhold the open avowal of her indebtedness to Christ even though it was certain that her health and her conduct would witness to His power.

I know what you sayI need not join a ChurchI can be a Christian at home. Better live a Christian life than wear a Christian name. My Friend, we never proposed to you that you should put the wearing of a Christian name in the place of a Christian lifewe have solemnly spoken the reverse of such a notion. We would earnestly remind you of our Saviors words, These things ought you to have done and not to have left the other undone. Attention to one duty is no justification for the neglect of another. I charge you, disobey not in any point. Confess your Lord. Own what He has done for you. And be sure that the outcome of your life supports your confession. Have the shaft of godly living, by all means, but crown it with the capital of a brave confession.

Another pretext might have served this woman, if she desired an excuse. She might truthfully have said, It is evident that an open confession is not essential to my cure, for I am cured. She was healed immediately and it is added that she felt in her body that she was healed of that plagueso that she knew that she was healed and it was clear that an avowal of her faith was not necessary to her receiving that great benefit from the Lord. Hence, many argue, To confess Christ and join with His people is not necessary to my salvation. Who said it was? Open confession is not necessary, no, is not permitted, till you are saved. How could this woman have made any confession of a cure till she was cured?

But being cured, it then became necessary that she should confess it not necessary to the cure, that is clear, but necessary because of the cure. It is always necessary for a disciple to do what His Lord bids him. It is essential for a soldier of the Cross to follow his Captains orders. Jesus bids us let our light shinedare we hide it? If we have received grace at His hands He would have us confess that we have received it and surely our sense of justice makes it needful for us to own our obligation.

Thus I have shown you that in her case many excuses might have been made. And yet, after all, it would not have been a fitting thing if she had stolen away in the crowd and gone home cured without praising and blessing her Lord. It would have been to her everlasting dishonor. I think she felt this when the Savior fixed those dear eyes of His upon her and said, Somebody has touched Me. What a vision of loving kindness and peace it was to her! In a moment she must have thought, How foolish I was to go behind Him! The very look of His face is comfort, the glance of His eye is joy. He would have granted my request with a smile.

When she saw what He was like and perceived the right royal bearing of the Bountiful One, she blushed that she had thought to steal a cure from One so ready to give it. The sight of Him was rebuke enough for her clandestine snatching the blessing. As to going away then without thanking Him, why, methinks the moment she saw His majestic mercy, the Divine royalty of His goodness, she could not do otherwise than fall at His feet and worship such a glorious Lord. Within herself she felt that it was a marvelous cure which had come to her by a touch of Him and she could not praise Him enough. The stones would have cried out against her if she had not confessed His miracle of gracious power and the earth would have refused to bear up such a monster of ingratitude.

Instantly she fell down before Him and told Him all the Truth of God. The thoughts of her heart were revealed by her Lord and never was Jesus more truly adored than by this poor creature, whose silence stood rebuked by her Lords love and condemned by His immeasurable goodness!

II. Secondly, HER HIDING WAS NOT PERMITTED BY THE SAVIOR. I told you, in the opening of the discourse, that to have let her story finish without bringing her out would have been an encouragement to that practical denial of Christ which consists in concealing our faith in Him. The unearthing of this woman from her hiding place was worked by the Savior Himself, and therefore, with all its apparent roughness, we may be sure that it was the kindest thing that could have been done. Her being brought out had the best of consequences.

First, an open confession on her part was needful in reference to the Lords glory. Beloved, the miracles of Christ were the seals which God gave to His mission. He was a man sent of God and the wondrous things that He did proved that God was with Him. If the wonders which He worked were not made known, the seals of His mission would have been concealed and so would have lost much of their effect. How would men know that He was the very Christ, if they never heard that the sick were healed? If this woman concealed her cure others might do the same. And if they all did it, then Christs commission would have no visible endorsement from the Lord God.

I should like to impress this idea upon those of you who do not confess your Lordwhatever is right for you to do is right for other people to do. If it is right for one Christian not to confess Christ and join a Church, it must be allowable for other Christians to do the same. Where would be Churches, where would be the continuance of Gospel Ordinances? And for that matter, who would be bound to be a preacher if no one is bound to make an open profession? If you may go to Heaven by the backstairs, so may I, and Gods grand entrance to the kingdom may be deserted. Who will care to go to Heaven by the open way, with all its responsibility and opposition, if you can just as easily take the snug road behind the hedges and slink into Glory without observation?

It will not do, Brothers and Sisters, if we consider what the Lord Jesus Christ deserves of us and how our open confession tends to certify His mission. The change worked in the spiritual and moral condition of the saved is Gods attestation of the Gospel. And if this is not to be spoken of, how is the world to know that God has sent the Gospel at all? Further, remember that our Lords miracles were illustrative of His teaching. Properly viewed, the miracles of Christ are the pictures of a volume of which His sermons are the letterpress. You take The Illustrated London News and you get the description of a public building, or the account of a grand ceremonyyou are glad of the printed accountbut you are helped more to form an idea of the whole business by the engravings.

You would not like to lose the woodcut, which is the chief feature of value in the paper. Now, in our Saviors ministry His Words were the letterpress and His miracles were the engravings. If the engraving is to be torn away, or pasted over, a great injury is done to the paper. And even so our Lords teaching would be greatly marred if its miracles were concealed. I showed you last Lords Day morning, that the healing of this woman was a wonderfully instructive incidenthow could it remain unknown? Must it be passed over to gratify her fear? Must Jesus work this wonder and nobody ever hear about it? As God is seen in His works of creation, Jesus is seen in His miracles of Divine Grace. Shall we rob Him of His glory?

God forbid that we should do Him this serious dishonor. When first I knew the Lord, if anybody had said to me, You will be ashamed to confess Christ although He has saved you. The day will come when you will blush to own His name, I should have felt indignant at the suggestion. Why, I wanted to tell everybody of the Saviors love. If there had been nobody else to hear me, I should have had to tell the cat. I felt like Bunyan did when he said he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed land all about it. I cannot understand how it is that you who know the Savior, or think you do, can imagine it to be right to hide away and cover up the glory of Christ. Oh, proclaim it! Shout it to all the world over that He has healed us, forgiven us and saved us.

But the confession had to be made for the sake of others. Do any of you wish to live unto yourselves? If you do, you need saving from selfishness. I have seen it brought as a charge against evangelical religion that we teach men to look to their own salvation first and that this is a kind of spiritual selfishness. Ah, but if that salvation means salvation from selfishness, where is the selfishness of it? It is a very material point in salvation to be saved from hardness of heart and carelessness about others. Do you want to go to Heaven alone? I fear you will never go there. Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved yourself. Be sure of that. What is the most natural plan to use for the salvation of others but to bear your own personal testimony?

Our Lord healed this woman for the good of the whole crowd. They must have all been astonished when they heard her story. He did it especially for the good of Jairus. Jairus little daughter had been living twelve years and this poor woman had been dying twelve yearsnote the exact time in each case. Surely there was a loud call to Jairus in this cure to exercise faith in Jesus and it must have greatly helped his faith, which was not quite so strong as it seemed.

Do you not think that her public declaration was required for the good of our Lords disciples? When they heard her story did they not treasure it up and speak of it to one another in after days and thereby strengthen each others faith? The remembrance of these remarkable miracles which they saw their Master work would serve them in good stead in times of persecution. Beloved, had not the Lord an eye even to you and to me, who were to be born by His Divine Grace centuries later? Do you not think that He fetched the healed one out on purpose that this being put into the Gospel might bring out hidden ones throughout all generations? Did not our Lord foresee that many would be encouraged to touch the hem of His garment by faith through hearing of her cure?

Thus, you see, the trembling woman must own her Lord, that her Lords household may be blessed. But especially she had to do this for her own good. The Savior had designs of love in bringing this poor trembler forward before all the people. By this He saved her from a host of fears which would have haunted her. Suppose she had gone home healed and had never confessed itsurely she would have felt uneasy. A sense of having stolen the benefit without leave or license would have caused her uneasy dreams and sad apprehensions. She would worry herself with the fear that the disease would soon return again, or that she would die from a fearful judgment.

Besides, she would have said to herself, I was little better than a thief. I did not come in by the door but climbed over the wall. I am afraid it will go hard with me at the Day of Judgment. Will a man rob God? Have not I robbed the Savior, Himself? All such fears were rendered impossible by her open confession and that which followed upon it. Jesus assured her that He had taken no offense. He wished her to have no fears, for, said He, Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.

She had been a very timid and trembling woman, but now she would shake off all improper timidity. I have known many persons cured of timidity by coming forward to confess Christ. I could mention cases of persons who have been very retiring and scarcely able to say a word upon any subject, but when they joined the Church and were baptized, their open confession broke the ice and the waters of their life were set in motion. Our Lord removes this infirmity by our obediencein keeping His Commandments there is great reward.

Our Lord also gave her an increased blessing after her confession. Perhaps the Lord is reserving some great favor for some of you when you avow His name. You hide indoors and He allows you milk enough to live upon. But if you would come out and confess Him, He would feed you with the strong meat of the kingdom. You would become a braver and more useful person if you would take up your cross. You are now like Saul, the son of Kish, hiding among the stuffcome out and be a king. Confess what Christ has done for you. For what did the Savior give her?

He gave her clearly to know her relationship to Him. He said, Daughter! I do not know that the Savior ever called any other woman daughter, for He was guarded in His speech to women. But to this one woman He said, Daughter. Oh, may the Lord give trembling ones to see and feel the near and dear relationship which exists between Christ and their souls! May your sonship come up before your minds most vividly, as a reward of obedience. May Jesus say to some of you, Son, be of good comfort. Or to another, Daughter, be of good cheer, your faith has saved you. What would I give, says one, if Jesus would call me daughter! Give Him your whole self by believing in Him and by confession of Him and see if He does not reveal to you His love.

What choice revelations you lose through sinful silence, I cannot tell you. But assuredly you miss many a cheering word from your Lords own lip. If you will not own Him, how can you expect Him to give you the spirit of adoption? If you receive instead the spirit of bondage you cannot wonder.

Next note that our Lord gave her joyousness. He said, Daughter, be of good comfort. Smooth those wrinkles from your brow, My daughter *Why should the children of a king   
Go mourning all their days?*

Be of good comfort. Ah, Friends! You hang your heads. Perhaps if you had grace enough to own Jesus more fully, you would hold your heads up and the sun would shine into your faces and you would march joyfully all the rest of your lives. I advise you to try it. One of the best medicines for low spirits will be found in a courageous obedience to Jesus. Keep close to the Crucified One and your own cross will grow light in fellowship with Him.

Next notice that He gave a commendation to her faithYour faith has made you whole. Why, it was not her faith which made her whole, was it? No, but Jesus puts His own crown upon the head of faith. It is always safe for Jesus to crown faith, because faith always crowns Jesus. Her faith would answer, Lord, I did nothing, You did it all, and, therefore, Jesus ascribes her healing to her faith. How much I desire that you, who are now afraid of your own faith, would win your Lords praise by coming out and bearing witness to what He has done for you! Then will you not only believe but also know that you have believed and end forever your present state of miserable doubt.

Then the Lord gave her a word of precious quieting. He said, Go in peace. As much as to sayDo not stop in this crowd, to be pushed about or stared at, but go home in quietness. Go home to your house and to your friends, with a light heart. All is well. You enjoy My favor. I have called you, Daughter, and I will never disown you. I have blessed you and you shall be blessed. I give you peace on earth and peace in Heaven. O you that do love the Lord and trust Him but yet have never declared your faith according to His command, you say, We do not know how it is but while we hear of Gods people having great peace we do not enjoy it.

You cannot expect to have peace and yet be disobedient. If you do not side with Jesus, do you expect Him to be at your side? You shall have bread and water so that your soul shall be kept alive. But you cannot taste the wines on the lees, nor the fat things full of marrow so long as you do not confess your Lord. The dainties of the cupboard are not for disobedient children. Are you ashamed of Jesus? How, then, can you expect Him to give you the kisses of His mouth? That He should save you will be more than His promise. But as He loves you, He must and will discipline you unless you confess His name and His work. Why do you lose present comfort by neglect?

All in the train of faith will go to Heaven. But why do so many ride third class, or even get into cattle-cars? Why not ride first class? To be out-andout for Christ is to ride first class. Confess your Lord. Determine never to hide your colors. Be heart and soul a Christian. Live for Jesus and be ready to die for Him. This is to go to Heaven first class. And why should you not? Why will you be fretting and fuming, moaning and mourning, when you might as well be singing and dancing and feasting in the presence of your Lord and His household? Do you hesitate to own your Lord and Master? Ah, me! How shall I sufficiently grieve over you? Let not another day pass over your head till you have left Cowards Castle and come into the ranks of the army of the Lord of Hosts.

III. Thus I have already reached my last pointYOUR HIDING OUGHT TO BE ENDED. Whom are you speaking to, Sir? Well, not to you, dear Friends, who are always to the front, lifting the banner of the Cross. Whom are you speaking to, Sir? To you, my Friend, if you are really a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. If you keep yourself to yourself, it is to you that I am speaking and I desire to press upon you your obligations.

What do you owe to my Lord? You are washed from your uncleanness. You are clothed with the robe of righteousness. You are accepted in the Beloved. You know that you have passed from death to life. Unless fearfully mistaken, you know that you are the Lords. Well, then, declare it. Do not be ashamed to take your place in the cross-bearing procession and follow the Lamb wherever He goes. By your love to Jesus do not turn to the right, seeking your own ease. Nor to the left, aiming at the peace of othersbut go straight on where duty and Jesus lead you. This is still the way to honor and immortality.

Do you not think you owe something to the Church of God, which kept the Gospel alive in the world for you to hear? Did not a band of godly men and women meet together and see that the Gospel was preached? Was it not so that you were saved? Should you not help to keep that Church going by whose means you were brought to Jesus?

May I be permitted also to say I think you owe something to the minister who led you to Jesus? What a cheer it is to us when we get a letter from one who has found the Lord through our teaching. And better still, when face to face we meet one who has trusted the Savior through our poor instrumentality! Those who are sowers of the Seed know what a joy it is to see it spring up. Who are the people who cause us needless depression? Who are those who withhold needful encouragement? Why, those who do not come out and tell what Divine Grace has done for them. For the sake of those who labor among you in Word and doctrine, I beseech you, come forward. Common gratitude should lead you to let us know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Besides, you owe it to yourselves. Are you going to be mere bats, fluttering out when none will observe you and hiding from the light? Are you going to be like mice which only come out at night to nibble in the pantry? O you that are hidden in the clefts of the rocks, let the Savior hear your voices and see your countenances! You owe it to your family. You should tell your household what Divine Grace has done for you. Many a person wonders that his sons and daughters do not turn out well, when he himself has never been openly on the Lords side.

Oh? says one, but then I am right in my heart. But is the light within to be shut up in a dark lantern? Who is to read a closed book? We want to see in the shop-window of your life some of the goods which are stored in the warehouse of your heart, or how can you trade for your

Lord? When a man boldly says, I believe in Jesus, and proves it by his actions, it has a holy influence upon his children, his servants, his companionsdo you not desire to influence them aright? Do you not think you owe it to your neighbors to show your colors? Why, there are whole streets in this city where scarcely a single person goes to a place of public worship. Should he slink there as if half ashamed of it?

What is to become of us if the little salt loses its savor? There are regions in this city in which dwell hundreds of thousands of inhabitants in which attendance at public worship is so scanty that the Churches and Chapels have only a sprinkling of people. Should not you that love the Lord be very earnest to let it be known that there is still a God to be worshipped, a Savior to be trusted? In these evil days above all others

*You that are men now serve Him,   
Against unnumbered foes;   
Your courage rise with danger,   
And strength to strength oppose.*

Many crowd around Him when Christ is on the winning hand. What is the worth of their hosannas? The style of man that a crucified Christ delights in is he who follows his Lord in the day of blasphemy and reproach. A true soldier of Jesus can stand up for his Lord alone. He is as true to Jesus when he is the only one as he would be if all the million went after him. Blessed is he who is not offended with Jesus, nor ashamed of His Cross. O you saved ones, run up your colorsfly them at the masthead,

nail them there. And never let the enemy take them down. Oh that God would move everyone here that has been a little shy or backward to go without the camp and bear the Lords reproach!

Now let me hear some of your objections and answer them. I hope I have been answering them all through my sermon. Here is one. Well, you know, Mr. Spurgeon, I am such an insignificant person. It cannot make any difference what I do. Yes and this woman was a very insignificant persononly a woman! When I speak thus in English, it is a very ungallant speech but if a Rabbi had said it in Christs day, it would not have seemed at all out of place, for they taught that no holy person ought, in the streets, to allow a womans dress to touch him lest he should be defiled thereby.

They thought that if a scribe tried to teach a woman the Law, he dishonored the Law by doing so. Religious men lightly esteemed women in the Saviors day. Our Divine Lord never gave the slightest sanction to such an abominable spirit and I am not going to lend any sanction to your saying, I am only a poor feeble woman. God thinks much of the lowlyyou must not talk so. Besides, many of you do not think so meanly of yourselves as you pretend to do when you want to avoid your duty. Do not excuse yourselves through pretended humility. If the Lord bought you with His blood, you are not so insignificant that you can be allowed to deny Him your service.

But coming out and joining a Church and all that, is such an ordeal. So it may be. In this womans case, it was a far greater ordeal than it can be to you. Picture her, with her delicacy of feeling called into the midst of all that crowd to confess her cure! Ready to sink into the earth! An unclean person who had broken the ceremonial Law! How she longed to hide herself away! Yet the tender Lord, for her own sake, would have her stand forth and what seemed an ordeal became a joy. Jesus does not excuse one of His healed ones from owning the work of His Grace. A dear lady who has long since gone to Glory was once an honored member of this Churchit was Lady Burgoyne and when she wished to unite with us, she said to me, Dear Sir, I cannot go before the Church. It is more than I can manage to make a confession of Christ before the members.

I told her that we could make no exception for anybody and especially not for her, who was so well established in the faith that she could surely answer a few questions before those who were Brothers and Sisters in the Lord. She came bravely and spoke most sweetly for her Lord. Some of you may remember her, with her sweet countenance and venerable bearing. When she had owned her Lord, she put both her hands on mine and said emphatically, With all my heart I thank you for this. I shall never be ashamed of Christ now. When aristocratic friends call upon me I will speak to them of my Lord.

She did so constantly. You never found her slow to introduce the Gospel, whoever might be with her. She frequently said to me, Oh, what a training that was for me! I might have been a timid one all my days if I had not made that confession before the Church. Now I say to you, if it is an ordeal, undergo it for Christs sake. But, indeed, it should be a pleasure to own your Lord among His own disciples.

Alas, says one, I could not tell of what the Lord has done for me because mine is such a sorrowful story. You know what I used to be, Sir. Sovereign Grace has made me to differ but my former life silences me! Was it not so with this woman? How could she tell her story? But then it was to the glory of God and so, she told Him all the truth. Whatever you were before you were converted, never boast of it. But at the same time do not deny it but honor your Savior. Remember how often Paul tells us what he was before conversion? If any rake up your old sin, answer that it is sadly true but you have been washed and much has been forgiven you. Admit that you were the chief of sinners and that even now you are less than the least of all saints but the Lord has brought you from death to life to the glory of His name.

I have so little to tell, says one. That is a good reason why you should tell it, for it will be all the easier for you to do so. He that has little to tell should tell it straight away. I will give you no other answer than that. But still, if you can tell that the Lord Jesus has washed you in His precious blood, I do not think it is a little thing to tell. If you can say, Whereas I was blind, now I see, say it and do not think it a little thing. Once you thought it the greatest fact you could possibly knowthink so still. Dont garnish the story but state it just as it happened.

But perhaps people may not believe me. Did I tell you that you were to make them believe you? Is that your business? You are to do right whatever the consequences may be. But they will believe you if you deserve to be believed. When we meet together as Believers and hear the story of a sinner saved by Grace, we are none of us suspicious. Sometimes we are a little too quick to believe and are apt to be deceived. Do not fear that you will be distrusted. Confess your faith, at any rate, and God will bless your testimony.

Ah, says one, but suppose after I had confessed Christ I should become as bad as ever. Suppose that this woman had supposed such a sad thing, and had said, O Lord I cannot confess that You have healed me, for I do not know how I may be in six months time. She was not so mistrustful. But suppose the Lord should leave me and suffer me to leave Him. Yes, and suppose you were to leave off supposing anything of the sort and just take His promise as it stands. He that believes in Him has everlasting life. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. Do you believe His Word? Then lay aside such suspicions.

Jesus does not give us a trumpery, temporary salvation. He does not save us for a quarter of a year and then leave us. If saved by Him, you will be forever saved! He is the Author of eternal salvation. If He gives you a new heart, it is a new heart and will never become an old one. If He puts the water of Life within you, He does not put it there as you sprinkle the pavement before your shop in the morning, which is soon dried up. But he says, The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. When I trusted Christ, I did not trust Him to save me for a year, or two, but forever.

When you go the heavenly journey, take a ticket all the way through. Some of our friends take a ticket to the next station and then rush out to get another. Take your ticket for the New Jerusalem and not for a halfway house. The train will never break down and the track will never be torn up. If you can trust Jesus Christ to carry you through to Glory, He will do it. Let not that fear disturb you.

Ah, says one more, it seems too good to be true. I cannot think that such a one as I may dare to link myself with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is so great and so glorious. Yet this is your only hope. You are only saved through being in Christ. This may be too great, too good, for us to imaginebut then we need not imagine it. It is clearly revealed in the infallible Word of God. He that believes in Jesus is one with Him. Come, then and claim that blessed oneness.

Be one with Christ today in His humiliation and you shall be one with Him by-and-by in His Glory. Be despised and ridiculed for His sake and you shall be honored and glorified with Him in the day when He appears. God bless you for Christs sake! Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1624 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

WELCOME! WELCOME!   
NO. 1624

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 16, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And the people, when they knew it, followed Him: and He received them, and spoke unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.   
Luke 9:11.**

MY subject has been suggested to me by the rendering of this passage given in the Revised Version, where we readBut the multitudes perceiving it, followed Him; and He welcomed them. The difference lies, you see, between the words, He received them, and, He welcomed them. The new version is an instructive improvement, of which we will, at once, make evangelical use. The multitude perceived that Jesus was departing and began to value His Presence, all the more, because they feared the loss of it. They could not tell where He might go, nor for how long, and they could not afford to part with Himtherefore no sooner did they see the boat leave with Him, than, watching the direction in which it was steered, they hastened along the shore to overtake Him at His landing.

They were not content to walk, but they ran afoot, and as they darted through the first village, the people enquired the reason of this rushthey were informed that the great Prophet was crossing the sea to the other shore! They joined in the pursuit and the running company was increased. When they reached the next town, there was quite a stir, as the citizens heard the crowd tramping through the gate and along the streets. And, again, the enquiry was heard, What means this eager, anxious throng? Again the crowd increased and on they went, hurrying as fast as they could go, till they actually reached the shore before the vessel which carried Jesus!

As for the Master, though He had taken a ship, on purpose, to be quiet and alone, He exhibited no signs of anger at their intrusion. He did not rebuke them as though they were rude and troublesome, but we are told that, He welcomed them. Had He been like ourselves, He would have regarded them as most unwelcome. But in the graciousness of His heart, He did not think them so, but honestly and heartily welcomed them. Now, if our Lord welcomed people at that inconvenient time, we might safely infer that He will welcome them at all times! But we are not left to draw inferences, for we find all through His life that He always received sinners and never rejected anyone!

Our Lord kept open house as long as He was here. It might always have been said of Him, This man receives and welcomes sinners. His motto was, Whoever will, let him come. If any desired to come nearer than being mere hearers, and would join the band of disciples, He was always ready to receive them! If many did not enter into the closest intimacy of His heart, it was because they were, themselves, unable to comenot because He shut them out. Publicans and sinners drew near unto Himthe very look of Him was an invitation, His finger beckoned, His eyes persuaded, His outstretched arms entreatedHis whole self attracted all men unto Him!

At the door of His love there lay no growling dog of morose suspicion. Neither had He placed there the porter of stern rebuke. The door was set wide open and over the portal were written the words, COME AND WELCOME. That is the subject of this mornings discoursemy earnest desire being that some who have been afraid to approach Him may be induced to come at once by learning how freely He welcomes all comers! First, we shall dwell upon the fact that Jesus welcomes all who come to Him. Secondly, we shall use it as an encouragement to all seeking souls and, thirdly, we shall employ it as a lesson, teaching those of us who are His disciples how to treat those who desire to see Jesus.

I. First, may the Holy Spirit help us while we dwell upon THE FACT that Jesus welcomed those who sought Him. We observe, first, that our Lord received all comers at all times. The time mentioned in our text was the most inconvenient possible. He was seeking rest for His disciples who had gone through the various towns and villages preaching and working miracles. They were a good deal elated at their success and it was necessary that they should have a little quiet retirement to think matters over and to come down into a calm state of mind.

Moreover, they were weary, for they were so thronged by the people that they had not time, even, for necessary refreshment and rest and, therefore, it was an absolute requisite, lest these few men, who were, in fact, the hope of the Church and of the world, should die of exhaustion! The Master put them into a ship that they might sail away and find retirement in a desert place. Rest was absolutely necessary to the overwrought workers. A great sorrow was on them, also, for John had been beheaded and it was meet that they should solace their grief by a short retirement. At this time, too, our blessed Lord desired obscurity, for Herod was enquiring for Him and even when that delightful king was in his best mood, he was not one whose near acquaintance anyone would wish to cultivate.

He might, perhaps, have listened to Jesus as he listened to John. But he would have sought Jesus life as soon as He had gratified his curiosity, or another Herodias would have goaded him on to murder the faithful Preacher who would have made the palace too hot for the wanton! Our Lords time was not yet come, either to be exhibited in a royal court, or to be slain as a royal Victim and, therefore, He sought a desert place for a little while. It was most inconvenient, therefore, to be followed by so great a crowd. Were the workers to have no rest? Could there be no retirement afforded, especially at a time when it was so necessary?

Is it not wonderful that under such circumstances our blessed Lord should welcome the insatiable throng? I think, too, that the Master desired, just then, to hold a conference with His Apostles as to the work they had done and the future which was opening up before them. Perhaps He willed to set apart a season for special prayer with them. Before any great effort, we always read that He retired to pray and so, depend upon it, after any great enterprise He would, again, seek private prayer. It would naturally occur to Him to rake in the good seed which the 12 had so successfully scattered!

But peace and rest He must not have, for the multitudes are on the beach before He can set foot on it. The Apostolic conference was broken in upon and turned into a great camp-meeting! The Master and His disciples are not allowed to get alone, even, to hold high and solemn discourse upon the affairs of His Kingdom. But here come the crowds, pell-mell, crushing one upon another and the Master and His little band find themselves the center of a great mass of people! Rest, or quiet, or holy discourse are out of the questionpreaching, healing and feeding must fill up every moment till the day is far spent.

Our Lord welcomed the throng with a gracious air! Full of tenderness, He smiled upon them as a captain smiles upon his soldiers at the muster. He did not lose His patience with them, nor chide them for their ill mannersbut just as if He had asked them to come and had sent forth His heralds to summon themHe stood ready to receive them! It is wonderful that He did not say, Go your way for this timewhen I have a more convenient season I will send for you. I have heard those words, somewhere, but they were not used by our Lord! They were used by one at the door of whose conscience the gracious Lord had been knocking. If there are any put-offs, they are not on Christs side, but on ours. Oh sad, that men should ask for delay when Jesus, even at the most inconvenient season, is ready to welcome them!

Let me put the Truth of God before some of you here who, as yet, are unsaved. Come to Jesus when you willit shall always be at the right time. Times consecrated to other purposes shall yet afford you welcome. The saints of God gather at the Communion Table and the spreading of that table is not intended to be a means of Grace to the unconverted! On the contrary, it is fenced and guarded and reserved for Believers only and none have any right there but those who are in Christ. The object of the Lords Supper is not conversion, but edificationit is intended that as many as are alive unto God should be fed there, that those emblems should remind them of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which are the food of their spiritual life. Yet if any of you should be looking onyes, and even if you should have intruded there without a right to comeyet if you seek the Savior, He will not be so occupied with the fellowship of saints as to refuse a sinner! His heart will not be so taken up with the near, dear and choice love of His own favored ones as to shut His ears to the cry of the humble and contrite! If you seek Him, even when you are intruding, He will be found of you!

Perhaps, also, I address some who have outlived revivals. You remember precious seasons when the power of God was present to heal men and many were, to your knowledge, healed. You sat side by side with some who sought and found salvation in Christyou did not seek and you did not findor if, perhaps, you exhibited some emotion, yet your search after Christ was very faint and dilatory and, consequently, you did not meet with Him to the joy and peace of your spirit. Now that the revival is over, and the flood-tide of Grace seems to have ebbed out, you have come, like the dying year, to a time when the harvest is past and the summer is ended and you are not saved! Around you blow the fallen leaves and you, yourself, fade as a leaf, but you are not saved.

Opportunities of blessing have been plentiful with you, but you are not saved. You are now at the close of the day and your sun is going down, but you are not saved! Even yet there is hope, for our Lords welcome is a long and lasting one! If you are drawn by invisible cords to seek the Savior, yield to those gentle drawings, for Jesus receives men even down to the shutting of the gate! It may be late, but it is not too late! You may go to Christ at midnight as well as at mid-day and He will never answer that the door is now shut, so that He cannot rise and welcome you. Even though the special means of Grace may have ended and the men whom God has blessed have gone elsewhere, yet still come and welcome, to Jesus Christ, for there never was an hour discovered in which Jesus would refuse a sinner that longed for Him!

Have you never read that text, All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and him that comes to Me I will in nowise cast out? There is no reserve as to the dead hours of night, or the raw hours of the morning! If a soul will but come to Christ, the Lord will never say no to him! It may be, dear Friend, that you think the present would be a very improper time to come to Christ because you have so lately been plunging into a fearful sin. You say, Would you have me go black-handed to Christ, black-hearted to Christ? Yes, I would have you fly to Him at once, even as the manslayer darted off to the City of Refuge with the blood of the slain still warm upon his hands! Do you put it to me as a question suggested by a sort of moral decencyMust I not let an interval pass over me in which I may, in a measure, wash out the recollection of my present sin?

No! I tell you, no! I rather dread, than desire, such a false washing as the mere lapse of time can give. Time cannot alter wrong, or make sin less heinousand if it pacifies the conscience, it is an evil peace, a false peace, a peace to be abhorred. Come to Jesus while yet the wounds of your conscience are bleeding! Come while they are at their worstneither washed, bound, nor mollified with ointment! When you are foul is the fittest time for washing! And when you are altogether undone and conscious of it, then is the season to hasten away to the great Savior! When Saul of Tarsus was about to hunt the saints of God, he saw Damascus lying in the plain below and he, himself, was ready, like a fierce tiger, to spring upon

it! But then and there Jesus appeared to Him. Might he not have said in

answer to the voice from Heaven, My Lord, let me go back to Jerusalem and endure a quarantine! Let me hide away for months and then come to You? No! Then and there he was converted, though struck down in the act of persecution! Nothing could seem to be more inconvenient than for Christ to receive him then and there, with the writs upon him for the arrest of the saints! Yet the Lord welcomed the persecutor and He will welcome others in the same case! My Hearer, I will not try to describe your sin of last night, nor will I make a guess at what you propose to do in sin before tomorrows sun has risen. But I will beseech you,

as you are, to arise and seek the Savior!

Poor prodigal Brother, quit the husks and the swine troughquit them now and without so much as tarrying to wash your hands, go home to your Father who will wash you and make you white as snow! Stop for nothing! Delay is your greatest danger! This very moment is the fittest for repentance and faith! Come now, for the Lord waits to be gracious. I do not find that when the prodigal reached his fathers house, he came there at an unseemly hour. I never knew whether it was the middle of the night, the early morning, or the middle of the day, for the parable does not give us a hint. At any rate, it was at such an hour that the fatted calf was waiting to be killed, a ring and the best robe were ready to be brought forth and all in the house were ready to keep holiday over him that was lost and found! Sinner, fly away, fly away to Jesus, be the hour whatever it may! Our gracious Lord cannot repel you, for even those were welcomed who came at the most inconvenient hour which can be imaginedand since then He has refused none.

The same Truth will now be set in another light by a second remark. Our Lord received all sorts of comers. They were a motley throng and I fear that few, if any of them, were actuated by any high or exalted motive. No doubt some came to hear and others came to seebut many came for what they could get. They followed after Jesus because they were sick and He could heal them. Ah me! I have heard it said by awakened ones, I am afraid, if I came to Christ, I should come from a selfish motive. Dismiss that fearwhich at bottom is self-righteous! What should a beggar come to your house for but to seek alms? To gain something is the only motive with which a poor sinner can come to Christ! Our fear of Hell, or dread of sin, or hope of pardon must drive or draw us to Christin any case, our motive must be to receive, at His hands.

I confess that I, at first, came to Christ only and solely for what I could get out of Him. It was an Apostle who said, We love Him because He first loved us. I have heard of a love of Jesus which is purely disinterested and I believe it is possible and that it may grow up in later Christian life. But at the first we must come to Jesus with an eye to what we shall obtain at His hands. We must come because we cannot do without Him! There is no other way of coming. It is a low motive, says one. So it may be, but it is a powerful motive for all that! At any rate, Christ exhorts us to come unto Him for rest and for salvationand I do not remember a single exhortation to this ideal, disinterested love! The Lord Jesus welcomed the multitudes though they came from low motives and so will He welcome us if we do but come to Him.

If what we come for is something for ourselvesif we come to Him that sin may be forgiven and that we may be made the children of Godour motives will not be disgusting to Christ and He will welcome us. Among those who came to Christ there must have been all sorts of people, but the bulk of them had hurried to Him hastily and unprepared. They came afoot, it is said, running. They had not had time to prepare themselves with any kind of decent apparel. As they ran scampering through the villages, each one gathered others at his heels. They came helter-skelter, a most promiscuous throng. They were not dressed for solemn worship, but there they wereand the Savior welcomed them!

I wonder how long a man would need to spend in preparing himself for coming to Christ? When he had done it all, what would it be worth? Preparation for coming to Christ is simply thisIf you are empty, you are prepared to be filled! If you are sick, you are prepared to be healed! If you are sinful, you are prepared to be forgiven. But all other preparation is quite out of the question. We must not supersede the Gospel by the Law and we would be doing so if we told the sinner to make himself fit for mercy. O weary, heavy laden souls, you may come just as you are! Hot from the fleshpots of Egypt! Grimy from Pharaohs iron furnace, you may come and sit down and eat the Paschal Lamb and though every rag about you is defiled, yet just as you are, you may come to the fountain filled by Jesus Christ, Himself, and wash and be clean!

They were a most unprepared lot of people but Jesus welcomed them. Most of them might have been objected to, for various reasons, by our Lord if He had chosen to do sothe most of them on account of their poverty. They had not even a crust among them. They had come away in such a hurry that they had not brought a days food with them and if they came to Christ, they must be fed by Him within a few hours, or else drop from sheer starvation. They were a ragged regiment, a hungry herdwhat some fine folks call a mob, the riffraffbut Jesus welcomed themand never said a syllable about their bare backs and empty pockets. How squeamish some of His servants arebut their Master had no such proud ways about Him!

I heard one say the other day that he could not attend a place of worship because he had not clothes that were fit to come in. I wonder what sort of garments the Lord Jesus would object to in a coming sinner! I am afraid if He were to see some of you, He would hardly think that you are dressed fit for public worship, for you are too smart by halfbut I do not believe that He ever rejected a man or woman because of their patched or unfashionable garments. What did He care for court dress, full dress and all that nonsense? Our Lord was no flatterer of wealthy lords and handsome ladies! No robe or mantle ever charmed His eyes!

I never read in Scripture that Jesus said, Come not between the wind and my nobility, you unwashed crowds. Never did He turn any away because they were beneath Him in condition and too poor for His notice. Nothing of the sort! It was the jewel of His ministry that the poor had the Gospel preached to them. He delighted to see the needy gather about Him to be taught and comforted! So, then, none of you can plead poverty. If you have not a penny to bless yourselves with, Christ will bless you without money and without price! Many of the multitude might have been rejected on account of disease, for into the crowd the lepers came in spite of disagreeable neighbors everywhere. They certainly had no right to mingle with healthy people, but they did so, for they had hopes of being healed.

Men and women were there who labored under defiling disorders, for which, according to the Jewish Law, they ought to have been shut up in a separate house. Yet when the crowd came to Christ, these poor souls came in among the rest and there is no instance of the Lords ever sorting them out and saying to anyone, I cannot receive you, for you are a leper. What a melancholy sight the Master must have seen when He went out into the streets and they laid there the sick in their beds! He always walked in the midst of a great hospitalamong the most horrible diseasesyet never once did He turn any case away! O poor Souls, sick Souls, come to Jesus at once, for my blessed Master will welcome you all, whoever you may be!

Neither did our Lord ever reject one person on account of youth. His disciples thought that such a preacher as He was ought never to be listened to except by persons of intellect, or at least of ripe years who could appreciate what He would say. And when the mothers brought their children, the disciples were much displeased with them. But our Master welcomed the young, saying, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of Heaven. Dear boys and girls, Jesus will not put you by to wait till you are older, but He will welcome you just as you are! Ah, how sweetly Jesus is doing this, to my knowledge, with many little folks! I heard last week of a poor boy who lived near my house.

A meeting is held by some of our friends in a cottage and this boy came, one night, and said, Please, Sir, may I come in? The good man of the house answered, You may if you will wash your face and hands. That I will do, Sir, he said, and he soon returned and took his seat. He was an attentive hearer and a devout worshipper. Though only 12 years old, he loved the Prayer Meeting and was always there. One evening he said to the leader of the meeting, Please, Sir, may I pray? and this poor child then poured out his heart before God with such sweetness that he impressed all who listened to him. One night, as he went out of the room, he shook hands with the good man of the house and said, Good-bye, Sir, perhaps we may not meet again till we meet in Heaven.

His words seem prophetic, now, for before the next meeting a brewers cart passed over him and his sweet young spirit ascended to Jesus whom he loved so well. What a joy to know that this poor child is now beholding the face of our Father who is in Heaven! I am right glad to say that we are continually receiving boys and girls into the Church. Child-piety is no rarity among us! We find it no cause of difficulty, but a wellspring of delight! Dear children, do not be afraid to come because you are so little, for Jesus has told the big people that unless they receive Him as little children they shall in nowise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven! He also said, They that seek Me early shall find Me. Come to Him at once!

There were some in the throng, too, whom Jesus might have rejected because they were too old. Here they come! They can scarcely see their way! They limp, they use crutches, they are deaf and their limbs are very feeble. Surely, when these poor old souls come to Jesus, He might say to them, What am I to do with you worn-out old creatures? Go and spend the rest of your days where you spent the first part of them! How dare you think of coming to Me when you are bald-headed, feeble, lame and blind! How can you be soldiers of the Cross? Glory be to His name, our great Captain enlists old men, makes friends with old women and delights to magnify the greatness of His Grace in the salvation of the most infirm! Father William, though it is the 11

th hour with you, our Lord still calls you into His vineyard! Come, and fear not.

Well, you say, I can understand His receiving both young and old, but surely sin must have led Him to refuse a comer. It was not so. Those who came to Christ were often very sinful, but He received sinners. Did you ever notice that the last person He spoke to before He died was the thief on the crossand the first person He spoke to, when He rose, again, was Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils? My Lord delights to draw near to the guiltiest of the guilty, to blot out their iniquities and to receive them into His heart of love! So, I come back to what I said beforeour Lord receives all sorts of comers!

Once moreour Lord receives all with a hearty welcome. He did not merely allow the people to come near, tolerating their presence, but, He welcomed them! When He saw that they were like sheep without a shepherd, His heart was stirred within Him and He at once laid Himself out to do them good. The sight of their need awakened His compassionthe deep fountains of His infinite love were broken up at once and flooded His whole Nature, so thatHe was moved with compassion. He proved that He welcomed them by the deeds that He worked for them. He taught them concerning the Kingdom of God. He healed those that had need of healing and He fed the whole five thousand! There was not one single exception to this ruleHe welcomed every one of themtaught, healed, fed and smiled on all!

He did not single out one, and say, You, Sir, may go your way, I will have nothing to do with you. But each one felt that he was welcome. It is just so now. My blessed Master is glad to receive sinners! His heart yearns over men! He longs for their salvation! He rejoices when they come to Him! He proves His willingness to receive them by the bounty of His Grace towards them! He multiplies His benedictions towards those that trust Him! He heaps on His favors! He does all that they need and grants them exceedingly more than all that they ask or even thinkand this without a single exception on any ground, or for any reason whatever! He that comes to Me, He says, I will in nowise cast out. This is the blessed fact.

II. Now I come to use this as AN ENCOURAGEMENT. If Jesus Christ, when He was here on earth, welcomed all that came at all hours, then He will welcome you, my Friend, if you come to Him, now, for the circumstances are the same. You are the same sort of person as those whom Jesus used to welcome. They were good-for-nothing nobodies! They were persons that were full of need and could not possibly bring a price with which to purchase His favor. Are you not just like they? Are you a very special sinner? I am sure I could find another special sinner like you whom Jesus has received. I will not go into detail, but I will venture to ask youAre you a thief?

*The dying thief rejoiced to see*

*In Christ salvation full and free.*   
Have you been unchaste? David was an adulterer and was pardoned and Jesus forgave a woman that was a sinner, who, therefore, loved Him much. The untruthful, the unclean, the ungodly are the sort of people that Jesus came to seek and save!

And then it is the same Savior. Jesus Christ is the same gracious Pardoner as He was in the days of His flesh. Why, you say, He is in Heaven! Yes, but I never knew anybody lose anything by going to Heaven! It is all the other way! Jesus has not lost His tenderness nor His compassion, nor His delight in blessing the sons of men. He is the same Savior in Glory that He was in His humiliation. I invite you to come, dear Friend, though you are suffering from the same unfitness as these people were! Come just as you are and come with the same expectation as they did for they expected Him to work wonders for themand He did. Jesus is in the same mind as when He would not condemn the guilty woman and when He prayed for His murderers! He is still bent upon the one errand of saving menHe still welcomes sinners. Since, then, you are under the same conditions, come, and expect the same result from your coming. The welcome that you will receive from Christ, my dear Friend, will be as hearty as that which they received!

When is it that a man does not make all comers welcome? It may be a person calls for whom he has no liking and he does not invite him to a meal because he does not want him. He would sooner have his room than his company. But that is not true of our Lord, for He loves His enemies and seeks His foes! He has abundant love to guilty men and hears their cry for mercy. So glad is our Lord to see the marriage feast of His love furnished with guests that He sends out His servants to fetch in highwaymen and vagrants!

Sometimes people are not welcome because they come when you have not enough to feed them. The good housewife murmurs, I wish they had come some other day. It is never so with our Master. He has abundant provisions and there is room, yes, and there is food. There is enough in Christ Jesus for all that ever will come to Him for salvation! All that the Father gives Him shall come and there is not one that shall come whom He will send away because there is not due provision made for him. That reason cannot possibly exist when Jesus, Himself, in all His fullness, is the Covenant provision! Sometimes a host may not welcome an applicant because it would be dangerous to his reputation to entertain him. We would, none of us, be eager to entertain a thief or a burglar or a murderer hiding from justicenor would vagabonds and tramps be our chosen guestsfor it would lower our esteem among men.

As for our Lord Jesus, His reputation was gone long agoHe made Himself of no reputationthat He might welcome the disreputable to His house and heart! They sneeringly spread it about the streets, This Man receives sinners and eats with them. Yes, His reputation was gone among the Pharisees, but He has a new reputation, now, and His great Glory is that He cleanses the chief of sinners and makes them heirs of God! O my trembling Hearer, you need not be afraid! Sometimes a man who has been hospitable has been known to grow weary of it, for he says, These people come and eat and drinkand then abuse me. Jesus has never been hardened by this! His house is open and His table is still furnished.

He foreknew our ill manners and He has not been surprised by the conduct of any of His guests! He knew they were unworthy. He did not entertain one of them because they deserved itHe did it all because He is infinitely gracious and delights to do good to the unthankful and to the evil. This is why He keeps His house open, stillthat those who are ready to perish may comethat the worthless and undeserving may come and participate in the bounties of His Grace! Jesus Christ will make you welcome, though society will not acknowledge you! Is there any man here that doubts it? My Friend, come and try the Lord! There is not a man on earth that dares to say, I went to Christ and He cast me away. You may inspect Hell, itself, and never find one who can truthfully say, I believed in Jesus and He would not save me.

Come, Friend, if He rejects you, you will be the first of His castaways! We will have you up in the Tabernacle and exhibit you as the man that Jesus Christ would not saveand then I will shut up shop and hold my tongue forever! I will never dare to preach the Gospel, again, if one comer to Jesus is rejected by Him. It never has happened and never shall! Come and welcome! Jesus welcomed the crowd and He will welcome youand He will prove that you are welcome by doing for you what He did for them! He will teach you, teach you concerning the Kingdom of God, teach you repentance, teach you faith! He will teach you so effectually that you shall truly learn and your heart, beneath His teaching, shall be changed and sanctifiedand you shall become a new creature!

More than that, He will heal you. Whatever the disease of your soul may be, only come to my Master and He will banish every plague of doubt, or palsy of fear, or leprosy of sin, or fever of lust!. There is no balm in Gilead, but Jesus Christ is the never-failing Physician and He can make you whole at once! Nor is this all, for He will feed you with the Bread of Heavenwith better than angels meat will He sustain you and satisfy your heart and mind with all that you can desire! Thus I have labored to encourage you. O that the Spirit of God may give effect to my words!

III. Thirdly, we use our text as A LESSON. Dear Friends, if Jesus Christ welcomes all that come to Him, let all of us who are His followers imitate His example and give a warm welcome to those who seek the Lord! Whatever their motive is, whenever we see people coming to the worship of God, and especially when we see them a little impressed, let us welcome them heartily! It is a grievous sin when strangers come in and find themselves stared at as if they were wild beastsnobody offers them a seat they may stand till they drop, but nobody cares an atom about them! And they may come again and go in and out for a month, together, and never a word is spoken to them. I pray you, do not so! But, on the contrary, personally look out for individuals and try to win them for Jesus.

There has been a great wind lately and it has shaken down much fruit. But windfall fruit is seldom good for much. Billy Bray used to say, The best fruit is handpicked, and I believe the best converts in the world are those for whom loving hearts wait and pray and plead! Sometimes, after a great sermon, or when there has been a mighty shaking under a revival, many come down who are only windfalls and of very small account. But those whom you win one by one, by caring about them, minding their estate and watching their growththese are the best of fruit and well worth storing!

Jesus welcomed men. His looks said, I am glad to see you. He seemed to say to the people who flocked after Him into His retirement, I did not invite you at this time, for I desired to be alone. But as you are so earnest and eager after Me, I am prepared to do what you desire. You are welcome to all that I can do for you. In winning souls, use an abundance of smiles. Have you not seen, in one of our magazines, an account of seven people saved by a smile? It is a pretty story. A clergyman passes by a window on his way to Church. A baby was being dandled there and he smiled at the baby, and the baby at him. Another time he passedthe baby was there, again, and once more he smiled. Soon baby was taken to the window at the hour when he usually passed.

They did not know who the gentleman was, but one day two of the older children followed to see where he went on a Sunday. They followed him to Church and as he preached in a winning way, they told their father and mother, who felt interest enough in their babys friend to wish to go. Thus, in a short time, a godless family that had previously neglected the worship of God, was brought to the Savior because the minister smiled at the baby! I never heard of anybody getting to Heaven through frowning at a baby, or at anyone else! Certain wonderfully good persons go through the world as if they were commissioned to impress everybody with the awful solemnity of religionthey resemble a winters night without a moon! Nobody seems attracted, nor even impressed by them except in the direction of dislike. Mind, then, this rulewhen you go gathering fruit, go with a smile. Men are brought to Jesus by cheerfulness far quicker than by gloom.

I saw a life buoy the other day covered with luminous paint. How bright it seemed, how suitable to be cast upon the dark sea to help a drowning man! An ordinary life buoy he would never see, but this was so bright and luminous that a man must see it. Give me a soul-winner bright with holy joy, for he will be seen by the sorrowing soul and his help will be accepted. Cover your lives with the luminous paint of cheerfulness, compounded by joy and peace through believing! By Gods Grace, smile Christ into mourners hearts! It can be done if the Holy Spirit will only give you a lesson! Jesus welcomed themlet us warmly welcome all comers.

Do not seem to say to them, You want to be saved, do you? Yes. You had better mind what you are about. You know there are a great many hypocrites. I am not sure of your sincerity. Do you really want to be saved? If the seeker cries, O Sir, what must I do to be saved? do not answer with icy wordsDo not get too excited. Be calm and let me lay the Gospel before you in a clear, didactic manner, for fear you should be deceived. I hope it is all right with you and that these desires are not mere natural excitement, but are the fruit of the Spirit. Still, it is my duty to be faithful and put you to the test.

Why, my dear Friend, if you had been in a right state of heart, you would have led that man into the Kingdom of Heaven before you had got half through those cautious remarks! Give Him a loving, hearty welcome not a cold, suspicious searching! Say, Do you want to be saved? Yes. Then come and welcome! Believe in the Lord Jesus and He is yours! You want Jesus Christ, do you? Yes. Come alongHe waits to be gracious! He is here present and all you have to do is to trust in Him. I put this in a very simple way, but there is very much in it. Jesus, the Master, welcomed sinners! Let all His servants wear the livery of love and set every door wide open for sinners to enter.   
But perhaps there is very little good in these who say they are seeking? The remark is, no doubt, correct! Perhaps there is no good at all in them! What then? Let us welcome them all the same! Did not our Lord receive you when there was no good in you? Should not you, also, receive such and set the Gospel before them, that God the Holy Spirit may bless them? But some are so poor that if they are received into the Church they will be of no service to itthey will be more dependent upon its charity than helpful to its funds. Yes, but these are the sort of people that our Lord used to welcome and why should not we? It will be an evil day for any Church when it despises any class of men! There will come a curse upon a Church that looks to mens garments and pursesand values them according to the guinea stamp. This will never do!

Is he a man? Then he has an immortal soul about him! Does he seek the Savior? Christ bids us encourage him! Is he a sinner? Christ can cleanse him! Is he troubled about his sin? Jesus can give him rest! Let us help him, however loathsome his past life may have been and however little he may be able to do in return. If anyone here wishes to find mercy and cannot find it, I would, during the last minute of my discourse, try to welcome him. Friend, you say, How can I be saved! Have you ever heard the Gospel, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved? Yes, you say, but I do not think I believe aright. Listen. Here is a verse for you. Get out your New Testament. Look at John 5:24. Turn it down. Turn it down and read it when you get home! I beg all of you who have not found the Savior to mark that passageread it carefully and keep on reading it over and over again for an hour!

Read it over 10,000 times, if necessary, for I want you to find salvation through it. I know this text will save any man living, God blessing it to him. Here it isVerily, verily, I say unto you, he that hears My Word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. What a grand verse! Is there anything in it about believing aright? Not a syllable! Only let a man truly believe and he, has, (it is not said, shall have)he has now, everlasting life.

Mark thatnot a life that will die out in a quarter of a year if he does not mind. No, but, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Suck at that text, poor Soul salvation lies in it! Believe in Jesus and you are saved! May God help you to believe it, by His blessed Spirit, and you shall live unto Him from now on and forever. Amen.

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REAL GRACE FOR REAL NEED   
NO. 889

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**He healed them that had need of healing.   
Luke 9:11.**

HE healed them that had need of healing, that is to say, on this gracious occasion no single case came before Him which baffled Him. However rampant might be the disease, however extreme the condition of the patients malady, Jesus worked an instantaneous cure. And truly to this very hour no spiritual sickness has defeated the great Physician. No sick souls have ever been carried away from His feet to perish hopelessly because their need outreached His power. Satans worst is soon undone by Jesus best. The Son of God, in no solitary instance, has been foiled. Still in the goings forth of His mercy He has healed them that had need of healing.

The text also indicates that our Lord continued unweariedly to heal all the multitudes that came. From morning till night, as fast as the various patients presented themselves, He worked their care. There was an eye to be opened herehearing to be given there, a lame man to be made to leapa withered limb to be outstretched. There was leprosy to be cleansed, dropsy to be dried, fever, epilepsy, madness and all manner of maladies to be subdued, and Jesus paused not, virtue continued still to flow to heal them that had need of healing. Though they had been countless as the sands, His love, like the sea, would have touched them all. His restoring power was by no means exhaustedthe oil only ceased to flow when there was not another vessel to fill!

Had the needy continued still to come even to this day, our Master would still have multiplied His miracles of mercy. In spiritual sicknesses, the great Healer of our sin-sick nature has by no means declined in power. He is far from being exhausted by the number of applicants who have come to Him. We do well to sing

*Your precious blood   
Shall never lose its power,   
Till all the ransomed Church of God   
Is saved to sin no more.*

If this present world should continue through a century of thousands of years, yet no sinner shall apply to Jesus for pardon and find that His cleansing efficacy has ceased! So long as sin shall pollute this earth, the Savior shall remain to purify those who believe in Him.

But the text seemed particularly, to me, as it flashed upon my mind, to indicate this further Truth of Godthat as the Redeemer was neither baffled by any one disease, nor drained of His healing virtue by the multitudeas the diseases which He healed were intense, the cures which He worked were memorable. They were not feigned sicknesses which were brought before Him, nor counterfeit miseries, else His cures also had been shams and He Himself had been a mock Savior. Those whom He healed had deep, true, undoubted, urgent need of healing! They were not pretended patients, with sores which they had manufactured for the occasion. They were not sentimental sufferers with griefs imagined but not existent.

Our Master worked health for persons who were well known to be cruelly diseasedin whom the mischief was no dream, the misery no fictionand consequently the cures which He worked were no fictions. either. They were evident, permanent and true. Fancied ills He left to others. He healed those that had need of healing. Sentimental grievances may be left to jangling philosophers and hair-splitting rabbisJesus deals with actual evils whose cure is urgent. Of all men who ever lived, the Prophet of Nazareth was the most practical. He did nothing for show, nothing for mere custom, but everything to work solid good and erase real evil.

Not a motion of His finger has He for feigned or fancied grievance, but all His power goes forth to those who have true need of healing. We shall take this thought, this morning, and dwell upon it. It seems to us to be full of comfort. May God grant it may bring into light and liberty some who have long been bound.

I. Our first head, this morning, shall be that THOSE WHOM CHRIST HAS SAVED WILL ALL CONFESS THAT THEY HAD NEED OF SAVING. Out of the whole multitude who have believed in Jesus, there is not one to whom His salvation has been a superfluity. I will be spokesman for them, this morning, according to my abilitythey will all confess that what they have received was what they greatly neededthat the salvation which Jesus has given them was a salvation without which they would have perished everlastingly.

For first, Beloved, all the saved saints confess that they had need of healing through their natural depravity. There is a sad bias in us all towards sin. Whoever may dispute concerning original sin as a universal fact, all the saints confess it as a particular evil in their own case. We are compelled to own that Davids confession must be ours, Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Our nature was corrupted at its fountainhead. When at any time we were put upon right courses by the stress of moral persuasion, or by the urgency of fear, yet still our heart labored to follow its own devices against wind and tide.

Even as the bowl from the potters hand, however straightly it runs for awhile, before long begins to curve according to the bias, even so under all circumstances we tend towards evil. To our nature, to do evil is easyto do good is difficult. We loved darkness naturally rather than light. Uphill work it was to serve God, but as swiftly as a stone hurled down from a crag pursues its downward course, so readily did we follow the way of rebellion. Our sin was of the heart, not of the surface, The leprosy was deep within. Our tendency to evil did not spring from imitationfor we had set before us, some of us, the noblest of Christian examplesbut the prompting to evil was withinthe taint was in our vital blood.

Now there was need of healing here, since the disease had corrupted our essential being and rendered us hopelessly unclean. To our hearts center there was urgent need of healing. But, Beloved, many of us have been led to feel that in addition to ordinary original sin, evil tendencies had in the case of some of us assumed peculiar shapes and dreadful forms of besetting and constitutional sin. I will appeal to certain of my Brothers and Sisters here, whether they had not a natural tendency to a quick temper, an anger soon excited and exceedingly mad when once aroused? In others, there was a strong disposition to pride. Even now, with the Divine Grace of God in them, it costs them much to keep their heads in their proper places. Alas, in how many others the animal passions are forceful and eager like hungry lions roaring for their prey and nothing but Divine Grace can keep them in check?

Ah, there are some of us who may do well to imagine what we should have been if Grace had not interposed! We are bold in spirit, eager in desire, intent in purpose, stubborn in will, energetic and ardentand had we been set on mischiefnothing could have restrained us in our headlong course. Grace leads us in glad captivity! And apart from this we would have been terrible sinners before the Lord. All Providences that might have thwarted us would but have incited us to more vehement endeavors to pursue our wicked and willful way! Divine Grace has conquered, but what if we had been left alone?

A Scotch gentleman was observed to look very intently upon the face of Rowland Hill. The good old man asked him, And why are you looking at my face? The observer replied, I have been studying the lines of your face. And what do you make of them? said Rowland. Why I see, said he, that if the Grace of God had not changed your heart, you would have been a great rascal. Ah, said Rowland, you understand the Truth of God, indeed. Many of us have to confess humbly that in us there was pressing need of healing, for if healing had not come we should not only have been sinful as others, but should probably have taken the lead in iniquity and been carried away by the wild sweep of inward passion to the utmost excess of riot.

Brethren, this need of healing will be confessed by the saints in this further respectthere was not only in us a tendency to sin, but we had grievously sinned in act and deed before conversion. I know it is very customary with those who are seeking Christ to imagine that the saints of God whom they respect and esteem could never have sinned before conversion as they, themselves, have done. They cannot imagine that the man who is now rejoicing in Christ was once as hardened in sin as themselves! Yet in truth we were even as you. When the Apostle mentioned the greatest of sinners, he added, Such were some of us: but we are washed, but we are sanctified.

O dear Seeker, do not believe, as Satan tells you, that those who are washed were never as black as you! We were just as vile. It were a shame for us to confess in public all our transgressions and iniquities before we knew pardoning mercy of the Lord, but it will suffice us to say that the remembrance of them lays us in the very dust so that we should not dare to lift up our head were it not that we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous! There is not a saint in Heaven but what had sinned enough to damn him to the lowest Hell if he had not been saved by One who knew he had need of saving!

Where had Peter been? As bad as Judas, certainly, if Sovereign Grace had not prevented. Where had John been, even loving John? Cursing and blaspheming the very Christ upon whose bosom he laid his head if it had not been that converting love stepped in and made him, in the fullness of time, to become a child of God. There would have been no difference between the best and the worst of men if Divine favor had not worked some better thing in the godly. And let this always be treasured up as a hopeful circumstance to you who would be savedthat in the matter of actual sin there was a deep and real need of healing in the saints who are healed.

No, Sirs, our sins were not mere fiction. Our repentances were not fanatical sentiment. Southey, when he writes upon the repentance of John Bunyan and his terrible accusations of himself, cannot refrain from thinking him a little beside himself and morbid in his feelings. The good man is candid and honest and wants to make something out of it, but he cannot see in young Bunyan any cause for such outcries against himself. Had Southey been able to look upon sin in that same vivid but truthful light which had shone upon the young tinkers soul, he would have seen the least sin to be exceeding sinful and would have felt that exaggeration in horror against sin is not possible! To sin against light, against conscience, against the Holy Spirit is to sin with a vengeance!

No degree of outward moral purity can comfort a heart which is once made aware of its inward defilement and of the actual sinfulness of what man calls a trifle. Our actual sins would have been draughts of poison to our souls if the Divine antidote had not been given. There was, indeed, great need of healing. Further, let me say there was need of healing in our case because, in addition to having sinned, we willfully continued in it. In the very teeth of Divine mercy, in spite of conscience and of the invitations of the Gospel, we persevered in our sinful courses. Do I not remember how often I was invited to come to Christ and even felt the gentle drawings of His cords of love?

But I drew back like a bull unaccustomed to the yoke! Do I not recollect how Gods Law plowed me again and again? And yet in those very furrows the cursed grasses and thistle of my sins dared to spring up! How often have I stood and wept and trembled, but have procrastinated, and so have gone my way to dry those eyes and look again into the face of sin without alarm! Yes, there was need of healing in that heart which the Cross of Christ could not affect, which the terrors of Hell could not subdue, which the loving invitations of a mother could not persuade to holiness, and that even the warnings of sickness and the fear of death could not bend to the will of God!

Some of you were long years before you yielded to the power of Divine Grace. You will sorrowfully acknowledge, this morning, that in your obstinate will there was need of healing, for had not that healing come, it is as certain as that you are here, today, pilgrims on the way to Heaven, that you would have continued to pursue the road to Hell. There was need of healing, for the disease was not one that would have died out by itselfit would never have come to a head and then have lost its power. It was a disease that would have spread until it defiled you beyond bearing and until the righteous God would have said, Put it away with the unclean forever and ever, for within the courts of Heaven it can never dwell.

O praise your God, this morning, you that are saved, for you had solemn need of saving! The longer I live the more I feel the need of daily salvation. I have need of my great Masters healing hand every hour! If the Lord does not carry on the work which He has begun, it will surely fail. If He does not continue to repress and destroy in us our carnal inclinations, they will get the better of us even now! If the Holy Spirit does not fan with His living breath that spark of Grace which lives within us, it will certainly be quenched with the floods of temptation. If there were no other proof of our need of healing than our experience since conversion, we should have more than enough! If ever I get to Heaven, I will praise God more loudly than any of you, for I shall owe more to the Grace of God that will bring me there.

But I suppose the same feeling is in every man that is conscious of the sin that dwells in him and trembles at his own lack of strength. God will carry on His work. He will not take away His hand from you, nor suffer you to perish. But in the fact that if He did so withdraw, the best of you would be cast away and before tomorrow would be apostates from the faith, you have proof that you have need of healing. You will have need of healing all along until you come to die. Even when just about to enter into the joy of your Lord, when the last sin is under your feet and your sanctification is all but perfectwhen you have almost destroyed, by His Grace, the last indwelling lusteven then you will have need of healing! He must be the Omega who was the Alpha, or you can never finish. He must carry on even to its close the work which in His tenderness He has commenced, or else it will be incomplete to your eternal overthrow.

So, then, it is established beyond a doubt, and I speak as the witness of 10,000 of Gods servants, that those who are saved were such as had need of saving. The Son of Man came to seek and to save us when we were lost, emphatically lost. He has healed us, but it has not been of a finger ache or a flea-biteHe has healed us of a disease most deadly and damnable. Blessed be His name, while we are forced to speak depreciatingly of ourselves, in that very proportion we can speak gloriously of Him! We had need of healing and He has given us just the healing that our spirits needed.

II. Having, as it were, cast up my earthworks round about the soul that I desire to win for Jesus, I shall now come point blank to the attack. You, dear Hearers, you unsaved hearers, YOU ALSO HAVE NEED OF SAVING. I am not going to talk to you, this morning, about your feeling your need of Christ. I know that you make that quite a favorite question and a fond excuse for unbelief. So we shall not speak of your sense of that need, but what is far more vast a subject, namely, your need itself.

You unsaved Souls, you have great need of saving! You have need of saving, because you are inclined to evil. You have lately been, in a measure, desirous to find eternal life. You are not, now, so callous as you once were. Conscience is awakened and you are seeking more or less earnestly after Christ. But still, with all this, your natural inclinations are towards evil. Your goodness will soon pass away like the dew of the morningbut your love to sin is engraved as with a diamond into your heart of stone. The strong self-will within your soul is still set on mischief. You will not come to Christ that you may have life! Perhaps you have never thought of your natural corruption and above all have never been humbled by it. But it is there notwithstanding your forgetfulness of it. You are a fallen, degenerate creature!

You are not a pure spirit, whose judgment is accurately balanced. You judge unrighteous judgment. You are not a creature with a free will that is equally inclinable either to good or evil, according as it may seem most beneficial to yourself. Your overpowering tendency, now, is towards that which is evil. Your mind puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness. And your nature, like an evil tree, brings forth evil fruit. You, perhaps, have never perceived this, but the very fact that you have not perceived it only proves that you have the greater need of healingsince the disease has become so thorough as to have made you insensible of its own existence! When there is no pain in the limb, then is it certainly in greater risk of mortification. And while your natural depravity causes you no pain whatever, and you are even inclined to deny it and take no shame to yourself concerning it, the more urgent is the need that the Holy Spirit should convince you of sin and that the Lord Jesus Christ should come and deliver you from it.

Ah, poor Sinner, what a ruin you are at best! Alas for human dignity, with its lofty pinnacles of morality and turrets of excellency. What theatrical pasteboard! What sand-built rubbish all appears when seen in the blaze of Divine light! Vain is your bandaging of your deadly sore! Your heart is, in itself, vile and deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. You may wash the platter as you may. You may make the outside of the cup as clean as you will, but your inward parts are very wickedness. The imaginations of the thoughts of your hearts are evil, only evil and that continually. You must be born again! Your nature is too depraved for mending. You must be created anew in Christ Jesus! You have need of healing, indeed!

In addition to this, dear Hearer, you are, day by day, proving your need of healing by your actual sin. I cannot publicly rehearse your particular and personal sins, but I know thisthe charge may be legitimately brought against every unconverted person here that you are daily living in sin. Take down the Ten Commandments and read them through. I will but remind you of one and beg you to examine yourself upon it, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Are you keeping that? Why, you live as if there were no Godyou know you do! And day after day and even month after month, you never do anything to manifest love towards God!

You have some love towards your relatives, but no passion like that is kindled in your spirit towards your God! You have no love at all and yet the precept is, You shall love Him with all your heart. Why, that one command is lodging charges against you at the bar of God every day! Indeed, the whole 10 you are constantly breakingthere is not one that you keep! These sins of yours are speeding as messengers up to the record office in Heaven and there you shall find written down every idle word, every sinful thought and every guilty action of your whole life! How will you bear to hear of all these in the latter days, when your body shall have arisen from the grave at the archangels trumpet? How will you bear to hear the book read out that shall rehearse your sins?

At the very thought of it your bones may be dissolved within yousins against a righteous God, sins against His people, sins against His Day sins against His Book, sins against your bodies, sins against your souls! Sins of every kind, sins unseen of human eyesins unknown to any but yourself and your Godall read and all proclaimed with trumpet voice while men and angels hear! You have need of healing, for you are scarlet, you are crimson, you are double-dyed with your iniquities! O that you did but know this! O that you did but feel this! You have need of healing and yet dark as the thought is, it gives me comfort and it ought to give you comfort to remember the textJesus healed those that had need of healingand if you are such, why should He not heal you? Your many sins only prove that you have need of healing, and the desperate depravity of your heart only proves, still more, that you are such as Jesus came to heal. He healed those that had need of healing! He healed just such as you are!

Further, I think I hear some of you confess that you do not feel this as you ought. Now I was about to bring this to you as a proof that you have need of healing. When a man does wrong and yet will not confess it, how wrong he must be! Or when, having confessed it, he feels not the proper shame, or feeling for awhile the proper shame, he yet returns to the same evil like the dog to his vomithow deep must the evil be in his moral naturehow trebly diseased must he be, inasmuch as he does not feel sin to be sin at all! When a man has done wrong and knows it and stands with bitter repentance to confess the evil, why, you think hopefully of him after all, there are good points about the manthere is a vitality in him that will throw out the disease.

But when the villain, having perpetrated a grave and causeless offense, does not for a moment acknowledge that he has done amiss, but continues calmly to perpetrate the offense againah, thenwhere is there any good in him? Is he not thoroughly bad? Now, such are you. If you were at all right with God you would fall at your Fathers feet and never rise until you were forgiven! Your tears would flow day and night until you had the assurance of pardon! But since your heart seems to yourself to be made of Hell-hardened steel and to be like the nether millstone that feels not at all, why, then, there is more need of healing! And you seem to me, this morning, the very man I am afterthe very man that Christ came to savefor he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, not to save those who had no need of healing, but to heal just such as you whose need is desperate, indeed.

As if to prove your own need of healing, you are, this morning, according to your own statement, unable to pray. You have been trying to pray of late and wished you could. You put yourself upon your knees, but your heart does not talk with God. A horrible dread comes over you, or else frivolous and vain thoughts distract you. Oh, you have said, I would give a thousand pounds for one tear of repentance! I would be ready to pluck out my eyes if I could but call upon God as the poor publican did, with, God be merciful to me a sinner. I thought it the easiest thing in the world once to pray, but now I find that a true prayer is beyond my power.

O Soul, you have need of healing, indeed, possessed with a dumb devil and all your other devils to boot, and unable to cry out for mercy! Yours is a sad case. You have need of healing and I cannot help repeating my text to you, He healed them that had need of healing. Why should He not heal you? Ah, but you tell me your feelings, your desires after good things, are very often dampened. Perhaps this morning you are sincerely in earnest, but tomorrow you may be just as careless as ever. The other day you went into your chamber and did wrestle with God, but a temptation came across your path and you were as thoughtless about Divine things as if you had never been aroused to a sense of their value.

Ah, this shows what a need you have of healing! You are vile, indeed, when you dare to trifle with eternity, to sport with death and judgment and to be at ease while in danger of Hellyour heart, indeed, has need of healing! And though I grieve that you should be in such a plight, yet I rejoice that I am able to add, He healed those that had need of healing. Though you know your case to be so bad, yet at times you set up a kind of self-repentance and try to justify yourself in the sight of God. You say, I have repented, or tried to do so. I have prayed, or tried to pray. I have done all I can to be saved and God will not save me! That is to say, you throw the blame of your damnation upon God and make out yourself to be righteous in His sight. You know this to be wrong! If you are not saved it is because you will not

believe in Jesus. There is the only hitch and the only difficulty.

Your damnation is not of God, but of yourself! It is necessitated by your own willful wickedness in not believing in Christ! And inasmuch as you are so wicked as to dare to excuse yourselfyou have great need of healingurgent need of saving. But, then, the minute that you have thus excused yourself, you rush to the opposite extremeyou declare that you have sinned past hopethat you deserve to be in Hell now and that God can never forgive you. You deny the mercy of God! You deny the power of Christ to forgive you and cleanse you! You fly in the face of Gods Word, and you make Him out to be a liar! When He tells you that if you trust Jesus you shall find peace, you tell Him it is not possible there can be any peace with you! When He reminds you that He never rejected one, you insinuate that He will reject you!

You thus insult the Divine Majesty by denying the truthfulness and honesty of God. You have need of healing when you thus allow wicked despair to get the mastery over youyou are far gone, very far gone. But, oh, I rejoice to know that you are still among such as Jesus came to heal! He came to heal those that had need of healing and you cannot deny you are one of those! Why, Satan himself will not have the impudence to tell you that you have no need of healing! O that you would but cast yourself into the Saviors armsnot trying to make yourself out to be goodbut acknowledging all that I have laid to your charge, and then, trusting as a sinner that dear Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world!

Remember, dear Hearer, you have need of healing, for unless you are healed of these sins and of all these wicked tendencies and thoughts of yours, as sure as you are living you will be cast into Hell. O my dear Friend, I know of no Truth of God that ever causes me such pain to preach as thisnot that sinners will be damned, awful Truth as that is but that awakened sinners will be damned unless they believe in Jesus! You must not make a Christ out of your tears. You must not hope to find safety in your bitter thoughts and cruel despairs. Unless you believe, you shall never be established. Unless you come to Christ, you may be convinced of sin, of righteousness and judgment, too, but those convictions will only be preludes to your destruction!

My dear Hearer, do you know what you are this morning? You call yourself a seeker, but until you are a finder you are an enemy to God and God is angry with you every day! Let but one drop of your blood go wrong this morning, let but your beating pulse be suspended and where are you? Why, in Hellin spite of those tears, in spite of those criesfor if you will not believe in Jesus, there is no purgatory for you, no place where afterwards you may find space for repentance and seek the Christ whom you today disregard! I have no alternative for you, however tender and broken-hearted you may be, but this onebelieve and live! Refuse to believe and you must perishfor your broken-heartedness and tears and professed contrition can never stand in the place of Christ! You must have faith in Jesus, or you must die eternally!

I shall press on very briefly to the next point, but I pray God to make these words of use to you before you forget them. I am endeavoring to speak simply, personally and pointedly. He knows how my soul yearns over those who are here, that they may, this morning, find life in Jesus! O may He grant the desire of my soul and bring them to Himself now!

III. Our third point is to you, O needy Sinner. JESUS CAN SAVE YOU. I need not enter into what your case is. Remember, Jesus has saved a parallel case to yours. Yours may seem, to yourself, to be exceedingly odd, but somewhere or other in the New Testament you will find one as singular as yours. You tell me that you are full of so much wickedness. Did not He cast seven devils out of Magdalene? Yes, but your wickedness seems to be greater than even seven devils. Did not He drive a whole legion of devils out of the demoniac of Gadara?

You tell me that you cannot pray, but He healed one possessed of a dumb devil. You feel hardened and insensible, but He cast out a deaf devil. You tell me you cannot believeneither could that man with the withered arm stretch out his armbut he did it when Jesus bade him. You tell me you are dead in sin, but Jesus made even the dead live! Your case cannot be so bad but it has been matched, and Christ has conquered the likes of it. O poor Soul, if you do but come to Him, you shall not find yourself one half the singularity that you suppose, for another has been saved just like yourself!

Remember again, Christ can save you, for there is not a record in the world, nor has there ever been handed down to us by tradition a single case in which Jesus has failed. If I could meet anywhere in my wanderings a soul that had cast itself on Christ, alone, and yet had received no pardon. If there could be found in Hell a solitary spirit that relied upon the precious blood and found no salvation, then the Gospel might well be laid by in the dark and no longer gloried in. But as that has not been and never shall beSinneryou shall not make the first exception! If you come to Christand to come to Him is but to trust Him wholly and simplyyou cannot perish, for He has saidHim that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.

Will He prove a liar! Will you dare to think so? O come, for He cannot cast you out! Think for a moment, Sinner, and this may comfort youHe whom I preach to you as the Healer of your soul is God! What can be impossible with God? What sin cannot He, who is God over all, forgive? If your transgressions were to be dealt with by an angel, they might surpass all Gabriels power. But it is Immanuel, God With Us, who is come to save! Though you were between the jaws of Hell, so long as the Pit had not shut her mouth upon you, He could save you! Doubt not, where you have to deal with Deity, nothing is impossible, or even difficult!

Moreover, you cannot doubt His will. Have you ever heard of HimHe that was God and became Man? He was gentle as a woman *His heart is made of tenderness,   
His heart melts with love.*

It was not in Him to be harsh. When the woman taken in adultery, in the very fact, was brought to Him, what did He say? Neither do I condemn you: go and sin no more. It was said of Him, This man receives sinners, and eats with them, and He is not changed now that He reigns above! He is just as willing to receive sinners now as when He was here below.

Once more, do you still doubt? Remember what He has done to save sinners. My time fails me, else would I ask you to go with me to Gethsemane and view Him covered with the sweat of blood. I would ask you to stand with me in Pilates hall when Pilate cries, Ecce Homo. To see the Savior as His shoulders are crimsoned with streams of gore for sinners who were His enemies. I would ask you, then, to stand beneath the Cross and view the hands and feet and side, all pouring forth His life-blood. These are the drops that take our sins away! These are the griefs of Him who took our guilt that our guilt might be forgiven. Can Jesus, the Son of God, suffer like this and yet there be no power in His blood to cleanse? What? Was the Atonement a fiction? Was the death of the eternal Son of God a thing without effect? There must be power enough there to take away sin! Come and wash, come and wash, you vile and black! Come and wash and you shall find instant cleansing the moment that, by faith, you touch His purifying blood.

Lastly, Jesus demands of you, Sinner, this morning, your trust. He deserves it, let Him have it. You have need of healing. He came to heal those that have need of healing. He can heal you. What is to be done in order that you may be healed this morning, that all your sins may be forgiven and yourself saved? All that is to be done is to leave off your own doing and let Him do for you! Leave off looking to yourself, or looking to others and just come and cast yourself on Him. You know Dr. Watts lines

*A guilty, weak and helpless worm,   
On Christs kind arm I fall.   
He is my strength and righteousness,   
My Jesus and my All.*

Oh, you say, but I cannot believe. Cannot believe? Then do you know what you are doing? You are making Him a liar! If you tell a man, I cannot believe you, that is only another way of saying, You are a liar. Oh, you will not dare to say that of Christ! No, my Friend, I take you by the hand and say another wordyou must believe Him. He is God, dare you doubt Him? He died for sinners. Can you doubt the power of His blood? He has promised. Will you insult Him by mistrusting His Word? Oh, no, you say, I feel I must believe, I must trust Him, but suppose that trust of mine should not be of the right kind? Suppose it should be a natural trust?

Ah, my Friend, a humble trust in Jesus is a thing that never grew in natural ground. For a poor soul to come and trust in Christ is always the fruit of the Spirit. You need not raise a question about that. Never did the devilnever did mere Nature empty a man of himself and bring him to Jesus! Do not be anxious on that point. But, says one, the Spirit must lead me to believe Him! Yes, but you cannot see the SpiritHis work is a secret and a mystery. What you have to do is to believe in Jesusthere He stands, God and yet a suffering Manmaking Atonement and He tells you if you trust Him you shall be saved. You must trust Him. You cannot doubt Him. Why should you? What has He done that you should doubt Him?

*O believe the record true,   
God to you His Son has given.*

And if you trust Him, you need not raise the question as to where your faith came from. It must have come from the Holy Spirit who is not seen in His works, for He works where He wills. You see the fruit of His work, and that is enough for you. Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? If so, you are born of God! If you have cast yourself, sink or swim, on Him, then are you saved! We read in the papers, this week, how a man was saved from being shot. He had been condemned in a Spanish court, but being an American citizen and also of English birth, the consuls of the two countries interposed and declared that the Spanish authorities had no power to put him to death and what did they do to secure his life? They wrapped him up in their flagsthey covered him with the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jackand defied the executioners! Now fire a shot if you dare, for if you do you defy the nations represented by those flags and you will bring the powers of those two great nations upon you.

There stood the man and before him the soldiery and though a shot might soon have ended his life, yet he was as invulnerable as though in a coat of triple steel! Even so Jesus Christ has taken my poor guilty soul ever since I believed in Him and has wrapped around me the blood-red flag of His atoning Sacrifice! And before God can destroy me or any other soul that is wrapped in the Atonement, He must insult His Son and dishonor this Sacrifice! And that He will never do, blessed be His name! May the Lord save each one of you. May He do it now and His shall be the Glory. Amen and Amen.

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONLuke 7:1-30.* Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #3178 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE PREPARATORY PRAYERS OF CHRIST   
NO. 3178

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30TH, 1909,

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 7, 1873.

**Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.   
Luke 3:21, 22.**

**And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.   
Luke 6:12,13.**

**And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.   
Luke 9:28, 29.**

**And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.   
Matthew 14:23-25.**

**Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead were laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me.**

**John 11:41, 42.**

**And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren. Luke 22:31, 32.**

**And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. Luke 23:46.**

THERE is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a Man of much prayer. He was mighty as a Preacher, for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, Never man spoke like this Man. But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible! We do not read that His disciples ever asked Him to teach them to preach, but we are told that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray. He had no doubt been praying with such amazing fervor that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer and they, therefore, desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a Man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful Man. His words speak to us like the words of One whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of Heaven! He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

Prayer seems to be like a silver thread running through the whole of our Saviors life and we have the record of His prayers on many special occasions. It struck me that it would be both interesting and instructive for us to notice some of the seasons which Jesus spent in prayer. I have selected a few which occurred either before some great work or some great suffering, so our subject will really be the preparatory prayers of Christthe prayers of Christ as He was approaching something which would put a peculiar stress and strain upon His Manhood, either for service or for suffering. And if the consideration of this subject shall lead all of us to learn the practical lesson of praying at all timesand yet to have special seasons for prayer just before any peculiar trial or unusual servicewe shall not have met in vain!

I. The first prayer we are to consider is OUR LORDS PRAYER IN PREPARATION FOR HIS BAPTISM. It is in Luke 3:21, 22Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying, (it seems to have been a continuous act in which He had been previously occupied), the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.

The Baptism of our Lord was the commencement of His manifestation to the sons of men. He was now about to take upon Himself in full all the works of His Messiahship and, consequently, we find Him very specially engaged in prayer. And, Beloved, it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate that when any of us have been converted and are about to make a Scriptural profession of our faithabout to take up the soldiers life under the great Captain of our salvationabout to start out as pilgrims to Zions cityI say that it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate for us to spend much time in very special prayer! I would be very sorry to think that anyone would venture to come to be baptized, or to be united with a Christian Church without having made that action a matter of much solemn consideration and earnest prayer. But when the decisive step is about to be taken, our whole being should be very specially concentrated upon our supplication at the Throne of Grace.

Of course we do not believe in any sacramental efficacy attaching to the observance of the ordinance, but we receive a special blessing in the act, itself, because we are moved to pray even more than usual before it takes place and at the time. At all events, I know that it was so in my own case. It was many years ago, but the remembrance of it is very vivid at this moment and it seems to me as though it only happened yesterday! It was in the month of May and I rose very early in the morning so that I might have a long time in private prayer. Then I had to walk about eight miles, from Newmarket to Isleham, where I was to be baptized in the river. I think that the blessing I received that day resulted largely from that season of solitary supplication and my meditation, as I walked along the country roads and lanes, upon my indebtedness to my Savior and my desire to live to His praise and Glory. Dear young people, take care that you start right in your Christian life by being much in prayer! A profession of faith that does not begin with prayer will end in disgrace. If you come to join the Church, but do not pray to God to uphold you in consistency of life, and to make your profession sincere, the probability is that you are already a hypocrite! Or if that is too uncharitable a suggestion, the probability is that if you are converted, the work has been of a very superficial character and not of that deep and earnest kind of which prayer would be the certain index. So again I say to you that if any of you are thinking of making a profession of your faith in Christ, be sure, then, in preparation for it, you devote a special season to drawing near to God in prayer.

As I read the first text, no doubt you noticed that it was while Christ was praying that, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased. There are three occasions of which we read in Scripture when God bore audible testimony to Christ. And on each of these three occasions He was either in the act of prayer or He had been praying but a very short time before. Christs prayer is especially mentioned in each instance side by side with the witness of His Fatherand if you, beloved Friends, want to have the witness of God either at your Baptism or on any subsequent act of your lifeyou must obtain it by prayer! The Holy Spirit never sets His seal to a prayerless religion! It has not in it that of which He can approve. It must be truly said of a man, Behold, he prays, before the Lord bears such testimony concerning him as He bore concerning Saul of Tarsus, He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles.

So we find that it was while Christ was praying at His Baptism that the Holy Spirit came upon Him, in a bodily shape like a dove, to qualify Him for His public service! And it is through prayer that we, also, receive that spiritual enrichment that equips us as co-workers together with God. Without prayer you will remain in a region that is desolate as a desert! But bend your knees in supplication to the Most High and you have reached the land of promise, the country of benediction! Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you, not merely as to His gracious Presence, but as to the powerful and efficacious working of the Holy Spirit! More prayermore power! The more pleading with God that there is, the more power will there be in pleading with men, for the Holy Spirit will come upon us while we are pleading and so we shall be fitted and qualified to do the work to which we are called of God!

Let us learn, then, from this first instance of our Saviors preparatory prayer at His Baptism, the necessity of special supplication on our part in similar circumstances. If we are making our first public profession of faith in Him, or if we are renewing that profession. If we are moving to another sphere of service, if we are taking office in the Church as deacons or elders, if we are commencing the work of the pastorate. If we are in any way coming out more distinctly before the world as the servants of Christ, let us set apart special seasons for prayerand so seek a double portion of the Holy Spirits blessing to rest upon us!

II. The second instance of the preparatory prayers of Christ which we are to consider is OUR LORDS PRAYER PREPARATORY TO CHOOSING HIS TWELVE APOSTLES. It is recorded in Luke 6:12, 13And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [See Sermon #798, Volume 14SPECIAL PRO

TRACTED PRAYERRead/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at   
http://www.spurgeongems.org.] And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.

Our Lord was about to extend His ministry. His one tongue, His one voice might have delivered His personal message throughout Palestine, but He was desirous of having far more done than He could individually accomplish in the brief period of His public ministry upon earth. He would therefore have 12 Apostles and afterwards 70 disciples who would go forth in His name and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. He was infinitely wiser than the wisest of mere men, so why did He not at once select His 12 Apostles? The men had been with Him from the beginning and He knew their characters and their fitness for the work He was about to entrust to them, so He might have said to Himself, I will have James, John, Peter and the rest of the twelve, and send them forth to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and to exercise the miraculous powers with which I will endow them. He might have done this if He had not been the Christ of Godbut being the Anointed of the Father, He would not take such an important step as that without long continued prayer. So He went alone to His Father, told Him all that He desired to do and pleaded with Him, not in the brief fashion that we call prayer which usually lasts only a few minutesbut His pleading lasted through an entire night!

What our Lord asked for, or how He prayed, we cannot tell, for it is not revealed to us. But I think we shall not be guilty of vain or unwarranted curiosity if we use our imagination for a minute or two. In doing so, with the utmost reverence, I think I hear Christ crying to His Father whom the right men might be selected as the leaders of the Church of God upon the earth. I think I also hear Him pleading that upon these chosen men a Divine influence might rest, that they might be kept in character, honest in heart and holy in lifeand that they might also be preserved in sound Doctrine and not turn aside to error and falsehood. Then I think I hear Him praying that success might attend their preaching. That they might be guided where to go, where the blessing of God would go with them and that they might find many hearts willing to receive their testimony. And that when their personal ministry should end, they might pass on their commission to others so that as long as there should be a harvest to be reaped for the Lord, there should be laborers to reap itas long as there should be lost sinners in the world, there would also be earnest, consecrated men and women seeking to pluck the brands from the burning. I will not attempt to describe the mighty wrestling of that night of prayer when, in strong cries and tears, Christ poured out His very soul into His Fathers ear and heart! But it is clear that He would not dispatch a solitary messenger with the glad tidings of the Gospel unless He was assured that His Fathers authority and the Spirits power would accompany the servants whom He was about to send forth.

What a lesson there is in all this to us! What Infallible Guidance there is here as to how a missionary society should be conducted! Where there is one committee meeting for business, there ought to be 50 for prayer! Whenever we get a missionary society whose main business it is to pray, we shall have a society whose distinguishing characteristic will be that it is the means of saving a multitude of souls! And to you, my dear young Brothers in the College, I feel moved to say that I believe we shall have a far larger blessing than we have already had when the spirit of prayer in the College is greater than it now is, though I rejoice to know that it is very deep and fervent even now! You, Brothers, have never been lacking in prayerfulness. I thank God that I have never had occasion to complain or to grieve on that account, but still, who knows what blessing might follow a night of prayer at the beginning or at any part of the sessionor an all-night wrestling in prayer in the privacy of your own bedrooms? Then, when you go out to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath, you will find that the best preparation for preaching is much praying! I have always found that the meaning of a text can be better learned by prayer than in any other way. Of course we must consult lexicons and commentaries to see the literal meaning of the words and their relation to one anotherbut when we have done all that, we shall still find that our greatest help will come from prayer! Oh, that every Christian enterprise were commenced with prayer, continued with prayer and crowned with prayer! Then might we, also, expect to see it crowned with Gods blessing!

So once again I remind you that our Saviors example teaches us that for seasons of special service, we need not only prayers of a brief character, excellent as they are for ordinary occasions, but special protracted wrestling with God like that of Jacob at the Brook Jabbok, so that each one of us can say to the Lord, with holy determination

*With You all night I mean to stay,*

*And wrestle till the break of day.*   
When such sacred persistence in prayer as this becomes common throughout the whole Church of Christ, Satans long usurpation will be coming to an end and we shall be able to say to our Lord, as the 70 disciples did when they returned to Him with joy, Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name!

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider OUR LORDS PRAYER PREPARATORY TO HIS TRANSFIGURATION. You will find it in Luke 9:28, 29And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. You see that it was as He prayed that He was transfigured.

Now, Beloved, do you really desire to reach the highest possible attainments of the Christian life? Do you, in your inmost soul, pine and pant after the choicest joys that can be known by human beings this side of Heaven? Do you aspire to rise to full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to be transformed into His image from glory to glory? If so, the way is open to you! It is the way of prayeronly there will you find these priceless blessings! If you fail in prayer, you will assuredly never come to Tabors top! There is no hope, dear Friends, of our ever attaining to anything like a transfiguration and being covered with the Light of God so that whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, unless we are much in prayer!

I believe that we make more real advance in the Divine Life in an hour of prayer than we do in a month of hearing sermons. I do not mean that we are to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but I am sure that without the praying, the hearing is of little worth! We must pray. We must plead with God if we are to really grow spiritually. In prayer, very much of our spiritual digestion is done. When we are hearing the Word, we are very much like the cattle when they are cropping the grassbut when we follow our hearing with meditation and prayer, we do, as it were, lie down in the green pasturesand get the rich nutriment for our souls out of the Truth of God. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, would you shake off the earthliness that still clings to you? Would you get rid of your doubts and your fears? Would you overcome your worldliness? Would you master all your besetting sins? Would you glow and glisten in the brightness and Glory of the holiness of God? Then be much in prayer, as Jesus was! I am sure that it must be so and that, apart from prayer, you will make no advance in the Divine Lifebut that in waiting upon God, you shall renew your spiritual strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, you shall run and not be wearyyou shall walk and not faint!

IV. I must hasten on lest time should fail us before I have finished. And I must put together two of OUR LORDS PRAYERS PREPARATORY TO GREAT MIRACLES.

The first, which preceded His stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesaret, is recorded in Matthew 14:23-25And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. He had been pleading with His Father for His disciples and then, when their ship was tossed by the waves, and driven back by the contrary winds, He came down to them from the lofty place where He had been praying for them, making a pathway for Himself across the turbulent waters that He was about to calm. Before He walked upon those tossing billows, He had prayed to His Father. Before He stilled the storm, He had prevailed with God in prayer.

Am I to do any great work for God? Then I must first be mighty upon my knees! Is there a man here who is to be the means of covering the sky with clouds and bringing the rain of Gods blessing on the dry and barren Church which so sorely needs reviving and refreshing? Then he must be prepared for that great work as Elijah was when, on the top of Carmel, He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees, and prayed as only he could pray! We shall never see a little cloud like a mans hand, which shall afterwards cover all the sky with blackness, unless first of all we know how to cry mightily unto the Most High! But when we have done that, then shall we see what we desire. Moses would never have been able to control the children of Israel as he did if he had not first been in communion with his God in the desert, and afterwards in the mountain. So if we are to be men of power, we also must be men of prayer!

The other instance to which I want to refer, showing how our Lord prayed before working a mighty miracle, is when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. You will find the account of it in John 11:41, 42Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me. He did not cry, Lazarus, come forth, so that the people heard it, and Lazarus heard it, until first He had prayed, My Father, grant that Lazarus may rise from the dead, and had received the assurance that he would do so as soon as he was called by Christ to come forth from the grave.

But, Brothers and Sisters, do you not see that if Christ, who was so strong, needed to pray thus, what need there is for us, who are so weak, to also pray? If He, who was God as well as Man, prayed to His Father before He worked a miracle, how necessary it is for us, who are merely men, to go to the Throne of Grace and plead there with importunate fervency if we are ever to do anything for God! I fear that many of us have been feeble out here in public because we have been feeble out there on the lone mountainside where we ought to have been in fellowship with God. The way to be fitted to work what men will call wonders, is to go to the God of Wonders and implore Him to gird us with His all-sufficient strength so that we may do exploits to His praise and Glory!

V. The next prayer we are to consider is OUR LORDS PRAYER PREPARATORY TO PETERS FALL. We have the record of that in Luke 22:31, 32And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your breth

ren. [See Sermons #2620, Volume 45CHRISTS PRAYER FOR PETER; #2034, Volume 34 PETERS RESTORATION and #2035, Volume 34PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATIONRead/download all the sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

There is much that is admirable and instructive in this utterance of our Lord. Satan had not then tempted Peter, yet Christ had already pleaded for the Apostle whose peril He clearly foresaw! Some of us would have thought that we were very prompt if we had prayed for a Brother or Sister who had been tempted and who had yielded to the temptation. But our Lord prayed for Peter before he was tempted. As soon as Satan had desired to have him in his sieve, that he might sift him as wheat, our Savior knew the thought that was formed in the diabolic mindand He at once pleaded for His imperiled servant who did not even know the danger that was threatening him! Christ is always beforehand with us. Before the storm comes, He has provided the harbor of refuge. Before the disease attacks us, He has the remedy ready to cure it. His mercy outruns our misery!

What a lesson we ought to learn from this action of Christ! Whenever we see any friend in peril through temptation, let us not begin to talk about him, but let us at once pray for him! Some persons are very fond of hinting and insinuating about what is going to happen to certain people with whom they are acquainted. I pray you, beloved Friends, not to do it! Do not hint that So-and-So is likely to fall, but pray that he may not fall. Do not insinuate anything about him to others, but tell the Lord what your anxiety is concerning him.

But So-and-So has made a lot of money and he is getting very purseproud. Well, even if it is so, do not talk about him to others, but pray God to grant that he may not be allowed to become purse-proud. Do not say that he will be, but pray constantly that he may not beand do not let anyone but the Lord know that you are praying for him.

Then there is So-and-So. He is so elated with the success he has had that one can scarcely get to speak to him. Well then, Brother, pray that he may not be elated. Do not say that you are afraid he is growing proud, for that would imply what you would be if you were in his place! Your fear reveals a secret concerning your own nature, for what you judge that he would be is exactly what you would do in similar circumstances! We always measure other peoples corn with our own bushelwe do not borrow their bushel. And we can judge ourselves by our judgment of others. Let us cease these censures and judgmentsand let us pray for our Brothers and Sisters. If you fear that a minister is somewhat turning aside from the faith, or if you think that his ministry is not so profitable as it used to be, or if you see any other imperfection in him, do not go and talk about it to people in the street, for they cannot set him rightgo and tell his Master about him! Pray for him and ask the Lord to make right whatever is wrong. There is a sermon by old Matthew Wilks about our being Epistles of Christ, written not with ink, and not on tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart. And he said that ministers are the pens with which God writes on their hearts heartsand that pens need sharpening every now and thenbut even when they are sharp, they cannot write without ink! So he said that the best service that the people could render to the preacher was to pray the Lord to give them new pens and dip them in the fresh ink that they might write better than before! Do so, dear Friendsdo not blot the page with your censures and unkind remarks, but help the preacher by pleading for him even as Christ prayed for Peter!

VI. Now I must close with our LORDS PREPARATORY PRAYER JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. You will find it in Luke 23:46And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. [See Sermons #2311,

Volume 39OUR LORDS LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSSRead/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Our Lord Jesus was very specially occupied in prayer as the end of His earthly life drew near. He was about to die as His peoples Surety and Substitute. The wrath of God, which was due to them, fell upon Him! Knowing all that was to befall Him, He set His face steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem and, in due time, He endured the Cross, despising the shame. But He did not go to Gethsemane and Golgotha without prayer! Son of God as He was, He would not undergo that terrible ordeal without much supplication. You know how much there is about His praying in the later chapters of Johns Gospel. There is especially that great prayer of His for His Church in which He pleaded with amazing fervor for those whom His Father had given Him. Then there was His agonized pleading in Gethsemane when His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. We will not say much about that, but we can well imagine that the bloody sweat was the outward and visible expression of the intense agony of His soul which was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.

All that Christ did and suffered was full of prayer, so it was but fitting that His last utterance on earth should be the prayerful surrender of His spirit into the hands of His Father. He had already pleaded for His murderers, Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do. He had promised to grant the request of the penitent thief, Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom. Now nothing remained for Him to do but to say, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. His life, which had been a life of prayer, was thus closed with prayeran example well worthy of His peoples imitation!

Perhaps I am addressing someone who is conscious that a serious illness is threatening. Well then, dear Friend, prepare for it by prayer! Are you dreading a painful operation? Nothing will help you to bear it so well as pleading with God concerning it! Prayer will help you mentally as well as physicallyyou will face the ordeal with far less fear if you have laid your care before the Lord and committed yourselfbody, soul and spiritinto His hands. If you are expecting, before long, to reach the end of your mortal life either because of your advanced age, or your weak constitution, or the inroads of the deadly consumptionpray much. You need not fear to be baptized in Jordans swelling flood if you are constantly being baptized in prayer! Think of your Savior in the Garden and on the Crossand pray even as He didNot my will, but yours be done...Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.

While I have been speaking to Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, there may have been some here who are still unconvertedwho have imagined that prayer is the way to Heavenyet it is not! Prayer is a great and precious help on the road, but Christ, alone, is the Way! And the very first step heavenward is to trust ourselves wholly to Him. Faith in Christ is the all-important matter and if you truly believe in Him, you are saved! But the very first thing that a saved man does is to prayand the very last thing that he does before he gets to Heaven is to pray. Well did Montgomery write

**Prayer is the contrite sinners voice, Returning from his ways   
While angels in their songs rejoice, And cry, Behold, he prays!   
Prayer is the Christians vital breath, The Christians native air!   
His watchword at the gates of death He enters Heaven with prayer!**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: LUKE 18:1-14.**   
Verse 1. And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought   
always to pray, and not to faint. [See Sermon #2519, Volume 43WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] An

old writer says that many of Christs parables need a key to unlock them. Here, the key hangs outside the door, for at the very beginning of the parable we are told what Christ meant to teach by itthat men ought always to pray, and not to faint. And this is the parable.

2. Saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man. It is a great pity for any city and for any country where the judges do not fear Godwhere they feel that they have been put into a high office in which they may do just as they please. There were such judges in the olden times even in this landGod grant that we may not see any more like them!

3. And there was a widow in that city and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. She had no friend to plead for her. She had nobody to help her and, therefore, when she was robbed of her little patrimony, she went to the court and asked the judge for justice.

4. And he would not for a while. He preferred to be unjust. As he could do as he liked, he liked to do as he should not.   
4, 5. But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. She seems to have gone to him so often that he grew quite fatigued and pained by her persistence! The Greek words are very expressive, as though she had beaten him in the eyes and so bruised him that he could not endure it any longer. Of course, the poor woman had not done anything of the kindbut the judge thus describes her continual importunity as a wounding of him, as an attacking of him, an assault upon himfor he had, perhaps, a little conscience left. He had, at least, enough honesty to confess that he did not fear God, nor regard man. There are some of whom that is true, who will not admit it, but this judge admitted itand though he was but little troubled about ithe said, that I may not be worried to death by this womans continual coming, I will grant her request and avenge her of her adversary.   
6, 7. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him, though He

bears long with them? [See Sermon #2836, Volume 6PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He is no

unjust judge! He is One who is perfectly holy, just, true and who appears in a nearer and dearer Character than that of judge, even as the One who chose His people from eternity! Shall not God avenge His own elect? Yes, that He willonly let them persevere in prayer and cry day and night unto Him.

8. I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth? [See Sermon #1963, Volume  
33THE SEARCH FOR FAITHRead/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] If anybody can find it, He can, for He is the Creator of it! Yet, when He comes, there will be so little of it in proportion to what He deserves, and so little in proportion to the loving kindness of the Lord, that it will seem as if even He could not find italthough if there were only as much faith as a grain of mustard seed He would be the first to spy it out!

9. And He spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. It seems as if these two things went togetheras our esteem of ourselves goes up, our esteem of others goes downthe scales seem to work that way.

10. Two men went up into the Temple to pray. [See Sermon #2395, Volume 41  
THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIPRead/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It was the place that was specially dedicated for prayer. It was the place where God had promised to meet with suppliants. They did well, in those days, to go up into the Temple to pray to God. Though, in these days

*Wherever we seek Him, He is found,*

*And every place is hallowed ground.*   
It is sheer superstition which imagines that one place is better for prayer than another! So long as we can be quiet and still, let us pray wherever we may be.

10, 11. The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men areextortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. It is possible that this was all true. We have no indication that he was a hypocriteand if what he said was truethere was something in it for which he might well thank God. It was a great mercy not to be an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adultererbut what spoilt his expression of thankfulness was that back-handed blow at the other man who was praying in the same Templeor even as this publican. What had the Pharisee to do with him? He had quite enough to occupy his thoughts if he could only see himself as he really was in Gods sight!

12. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. Observe that there is no prayer in all that the Pharisee said. There was a great deal of self-righteousness and self-congratulation, but nothing else. There was certainly no prayer at all in it!

13. And the publican, standing afar offJust on the edge of the crowd, keeping as far away as he could from the Most Holy Place  
13. Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. [See Sermon #1949, Volume

33A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTHRead/download the entire sermon, free of

charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That was all prayerit was a prayer for mercy, it was a prayer in which the suppliant took his right place, for he was, as he said, a sinner. He does not describe himself as a penitent sinner, or as a praying sinner, but simply as a sinner. And as a sinner, he goes to God asking for mercy. Our English version does not give the full meaning of the publicans prayer, it is, God be propitious to me, that is, be gracious to me through the ordained Sacrifice. And that is one of the points of the prayer that made it so acceptable to God. There is a mention of the Atonement in it. There is a pleading of the sacrificial blood. It was a real prayer and an acceptable prayerwhile the Pharisees boasting was not a prayer at all.

14. I tell you, this manThis publican, sinner as he had been, though he had no broad phylacteries like the Pharisee had, though he may not have washed his hands before he came into the Temple, as, no doubt the Pharisee didthis man, who could not congratulate himself upon his own excellence, this man

14. Went down to his house justified rather than the other. He obtained both justification and the peace of mind that comes from it! God smiled upon him and set him at ease concerning his sin. The other man received no justificationhe had not sought it and he did not get it. He had a kind of spurious ease of mind when he went into the Temple and he probably carried it away with him! But he certainly was not justified in

the sight of God. [See Sermon #2687, Volume 46TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

14. For everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. God turns things upside down! If we think much of ourselves, He makes us little, and if we make little of ourselves, we shall find that a humble and contrite heart He will not despise! May He teach us so to pray that we may go down to our house justified, as the publican was!

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 #2658 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

WAKING TO SEE CHRISTS GLORY   
NO. 2658

A SERMON   
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, JANUARY 21, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 3, 1882.

**And when they were awake, they saw His glory and the two men that stood with Him.   
Luke 9:32.**

It seems, at first sight, a strange thing that the Apostles should have been asleep at such a time, yet, if we think of the circumstances in which they were placed and of the extreme excitement under which they must have labored, it will not appear at all amazing that Peter and they that were with Him were heavy with sleep. In the 28th verse it is written, concerning our Lord, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered and His raiment was white and glistening. We know that the Savior frequently retired to some quiet, secluded spot for fellowship with His Father and that, sometimes, He spent the whole night in prayer. It is very probable that on this occasion He had been engaged in earnest prayer for several hours before the Transfiguration came. And it is worthy of note that He was transfigured while He was praying. Every blessing comes to the great Head of the Church and to all the members of His mystical body through prayer! There is nothing promised to us without prayer, but, with prayer, everything is provided for usand by prayer we shall ascend into Glory.

I cannot tell how long the Lord had been in prayer but, judging from His usual manner and custom, I should suppose that He had spent some hours in supplication. Even the three most highly favored Apostles were not as spiritually minded as He was and they grew weary while He was still full of holy vigor and fervor. The most zealous among us might be tired of listening to the best man in the world if he were to keep on praying hour after hour, yet he himself might be enjoying a special baptism of the Spirit and be quite unconscious of fatigue and, in his wrestling with God, might be all the while going from strength to strength. We, who were merely onlookers, would probably grow drowsy and be unable to keep up the strain as he would keep it upour spirit might be willing enough to sympathize with himbut the weakness of our flesh would make us, like the Apostles, heavy with sleep. I wonder not, therefore, if the Saviors supplication was long-continued and that His disciples grew weary and fell into a state of slumber!

Probably, however, their sleeping was the result of the extraordinary excitement through which they had passed, for, as in extreme pain, kind Nature comes to the rescue and causes a swooning or fainting fit by which the poor sufferer is relieved. sometimes she comes in when there is a stress of mental excitement, whether joyous or grievous, and gives rest, even by unwilling slumber, to those who otherwise might have been exhausted. You remember, dear Friends, that these very persons fell asleep in Gethsemane. When their Master rose up from His agony of prayer and came back to them, He found them sleeping for sorrow. They were themselves so depressed in spirit by His sufferings, that although they had true sympathy with Him, as far as they could have it, they fell asleep and their Master, while gently chiding them, made excuse for them as He said, What, could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation: the spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.

These Apostles are not the only persons who have slept in the presence of the grandly supernatural. It happened so to Danielthat Seer with the burning eyes who seemed as if he could look right into the glories of Heaven without blinking or being blinded by the wondrous vision! Yet we read in his 8th Chapter, at the 18th verse, when an angel appeared to him, Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me and set me upright. And further, in the 10th Chapter, at the 8th verse, we read, Therefore I was left alone and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. These supernatural things are too much for mortal men to endure! The narrow compass of our mind cannot contain the Infinite and if, when we behold the Glory of God to an unusual degree, we do not dieif our lives are spared after we have seen that great sightat least the image of death must come upon us and we must fall into a deep sleep. I will not, therefore, blame Peter, James and John for sleeping on that memorable occasion, for I do not think that there was any sin in their slumbering under such circumstances. They were Apostles, but they were only men and, being men, they were feeble creatures. And when they came into those deep waters, they were altogether out of their depth, so they began to sink in the ocean of the Divine Glory and soon were lost in the unconsciousness of sleep. Marvel not, therefore, Brothers and Sisters, that you find these three Apostles slumbering even in the Presence of their Transfigured Lord!

But, nowand this will be our first head it was necessary that they should be awake to see the glories of Christ. Secondly, if you and I are to see the glories of Christ, it is necessary that we, also, should be awake, and that is more than can be said of all of us. I may say to some, Let us not sleep as others do, for there are many who are so soundly sleeping that they are quite oblivious of the glories of Christ. When I have spoken on those two points, I want to close my discourse by showing you that this doctrine of the necessity of our wakefulness explains many things.

I. When they were awake, they saw His glory and the two men that stood with Him. So, first, IT WAS NECESSARY FOR THEM TO BE AWAKE TO SEE CHRISTS GLORY.

It was necessary, first, that Christs Transfiguration might be known to be a factnot a dream, nor a piece of imagination which had no real existence. When they were awake, they saw His glory. It was a literal matter of fact to them. As surely as Christ was born at Bethlehem. As certainly as He toiled in the carpenters shop at Nazareth. As truly as His blessed feet trudged over the holy fields of Judaea. As truly as He healed the sick and preached the Gospel wherever He went and as really as He did actually die upon the Cross of Calvary, so it is a matter of plain fact that Jesus Christ did, on a certain mountainwhat mountain we do not knowundergo a wonderful change, for the time being, in which His glory was marvelously and distinctly displayed so that His three disciples could see it!

And, behold, there talked with Him two menElijah, who never died, and who was there with Him bodily. And Moses, who did die, and so may only have been there in spirit, unless that dispute between Michael the Archangel and the devil, about the body of Moses, may relate to the fetching away of that body that he might enjoy the same privilege as Enoch and Elijah did. Of that matter, I know nothing, but those two men, Moses and Elijah, were certainly therenot merely in appearance, but in reality. And our Lord Jesus Christ was really transfiguredthe fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. It is true that Peter did not know what he said, but he knew what he saw when he was wide awake. The Revised Version renders our text, When they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men that stood with Him. They had not imagined this scene while they were in a semiconscious state between sleeping and waking! It was no night vision or daydream. It was not something painted by fancy upon their eyeballs and which had no actual existence, but it was a real meeting between their Lord and Moses and Elijah. They did see Christ and His two companions from Heaven and they did hear the Fathers voice, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him.

Peter did not know what he said, but he knew what he heard. He was wide awake enough to understand that message and, long afterwards, he recalled it when he wrote concerning his Lord, For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him on the holy mount. So, you see, dear Friends, that they had to be awake in order that they might be able to confirm all this as an actual occurrence. And, to my mind, this is very pleasant. I like to remember that the Lord Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, let some beams of His glory shine out even while He was here below. And if, in His humiliation, His transfigured face appeared so bright, what must His glory be above where His face shines brighter than the sun, and His eyes are as flames of fire, and his feet like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace? What is now the matchless beauty of that Visage which was marred more than that of any other man? When He did but for a moment withdraw the veil, His disciples were overwhelmed with the magnificence of the display! But what must it be to see His face forever in Heaven above?

Next, it was necessary that the disciples should be awake, that they might see the real glory of Christ. I trust they were spiritual enough to know that the splendor which they saw was not the essential glory of Christs Godhead, for that no man can see. Neither was it that secret spiritua1 glory which Christ always had, for that is not a sight for human eyes to behold, but for loving hearts to think of with reverent affection. But it was a special glow which was, for the time, shed upon His Humanity and even upon the garments in which that Humanity was arrayed, so that His raiment was white and glistening. The Apostles then saw Christ in some measure as He will be, by-and-by, and, being fully awake, they knew that it was not an illusion that they were looking upon, but that it was real glory which streamed from the Saviors face and from every part of His most blessed and adorable Person. We are glad to know that Christ has no fictitious honors and no empty pomp, but that there is about Him a real glory which our opened eyes may see and which we may perceive without being fanatical or frenzied! Such a glory as we can see in the time of our quiet, calm judgment and earnest, deliberate thought, when every faculty is in full exercise and our whole soul is in the enjoyment of the utmost degree of vigorous health. I care little for the visions that need night, curtains and dreams before they can be perceived! I prefer the glory which can be seen by a man when he is fully awake and all his faculties are awakened so that he is able to discern between truth and fiction, and to detect any imposition that may be attempted to be played upon him.

Further, these disciples were fully awake that they might perceive somewhat of the greatness of Christs glory. Do you not envy these three holy men who saw our Lord in the holy mount? So glorious was He that even the mountain, itself, was made holy wherein this transaction occurred, for so Peter called it. From that time it was as holy as Sinai, itself, where God came down in terrible pomp of power to proclaim His Law. Had not these Apostles been wide awake, they would not have perceived how truly marvelous is Christs glory. What would not any of us give, just now, for a sight of Christ with our eyes wide awake? What must He be like who is the very center of Heavens glory? All the grandeur of man is but external, but there is about Christs very face a beauty of character which continually shines outthe luster of Deity which gleams through His Humanity so that to see Him as He is must be the fairest sight in the whole universe! To behold Him but for a moment must be the most dazzling vision that ever fell to the lot of men! Did you ever hear dying men and women talk about Him when they have begun to see Him? What strange words sometimes drop from their lips just as they are departing this lifegiving us just a hint as to how grand He must be whose glory the Apostles saw when they were with Him on the holy mount!

One thing which they were fully awake to see was this, the singularity of the glory. If you read the text, you will notice that when they were awake, they saw His gloryand the glory of Moses and Elijah? Oh, no! Not at all. But did they not see Moses and Elijah? Yes, but mark how the text sinks, as it were, when it speaks of themThey saw His glory and the two men that stood with Him. There is nothing about any glory being around or upon themthey are nothing but the two men that stood with Him. He is fairer than the children of men, greater than Moses and greater than Elijah, mighty as both of them were! I think that we never truly see Christ until we behold Him all aloneas we never see the sun and the stars at the same time. If you once see the sun flooding the sky with its glow, you will find that the stars have disappeared. The Apostles saw the greatest of the Prophets and the great law-giver, after whom there was never the like till Christ Himself cameyet the Inspired record concerning the event is, They saw His glory and the two men that stood with Him. May you never see any earthly representatives of the Church of God in any higher place than this! In the Church and in all its ministers, may you see His glory and the men that stand with Him. And when you look upon those whose feet are beautiful because they proclaim the Gospel of Christ, yet may you only see His glory and the men that stand with Him to speak in His name!

The Apostles needed to be wide awake to discern this difference and so do we, for many, nowadays, seem to have no more respect for Christ than they have for His disciples. I know that there are some who think more of a dogma that was promulgated by Calvin, because it is Calvins, than they do of that which Christ has preached because it is Christs! And there are some who will refer everything they believe to The Minutes of Conference, or the sayings of Mr. Wesley, but some of the sayings of Christ do not seem to have as much weight with them. As for us, I trust that we may always see the true and noble men who stand with Christ, but, first of all, may we see His glory because Christ has awakened us out of that sinful sleep in which we make no distinction between the Master and the servant! Happy are we if He has taught us that the greatest of His servants is not worthy to unloose the laces of His shoes!

So much, then, upon the necessity for these three men being fully awake.   
II. Now, Brothers and Sisters, let me speak to you upon the second part of our subject which is that IT IS NECESSARY FOR US, ALSO, TO BE AWAKE IF WE ARE TO SEE CHRISTS GLORY.   
We have not dreamt our religion. It has not come to us as a vision of the night, but when we were fully awake, we saw Christs glory. We have seen His glory when we have been awake without weariness, awake without pain, awake without losses, awake without fears and trembling. In our coolest moments, when there was the least likelihood of our being deceived, we have seen His glory as our Savior, our Helper, our Keeper, our All-in-All. Set that fact down, then, and stand to it before the face of every man who dares to speak a word against Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, that just as truly as when they were awake, they saw His glory, so have we seen it in our most wakeful and calm and quiet moments!   
But, dear Friends, let me impress upon your minds the truth that, in order to see the glory of Christ, it is necessary that we should be fully awake. Are we fully awake? Is there a man among us who has even one eye wide open? Is there not a corner of it still sealed? Are our mental and spiritual faculties really quickened to the utmost, or are we not still, to a large extent, as dreamers compared with what we ought to be in the Presence of Christ? Come now, Brother, are your highest powers thoroughly awakened? I believe that it was so with Peter, James and John, and that what little spiritual faculty they then possessedfor they were then but babes in Gracewas fully awakened to learn all that could be learned from their Lord and Master in that mysterious manifestation of His glory. Are we in such a condition as that? There are many things that tend to make the soul go off into sleep, so let us bestir ourselves, for, unless all our powers of mind and heart are fixed upon our Lord, we shall not fully behold His glory. And if ever there was a sight that demanded and deserved all a mans powers of vision, it is the sight of the glorious Savior who stooped to die for us and who now is at the Fathers right hand interceding for us! When you hear the Gospel, hear it with both your ears and with your whole heart and soul! When you are present in the assembly of the saints, be really theredo not come, as some men do, leaving their real selves at home or at their place of business. They sit here and we think that they are here, but they are not! Their thoughts are far away over the seas, or in their shops, even when the preacher is proclaiming the glorious Gospel of the blessed God! You know that it is so with many, but we cannot expect to have a clear sight of Christ until we are fully awake as these three Apostles were upon the mountain.   
But to what shall we be awake? Well, first, it is a good thing to be awake to our present condition and circumstances. Brothers, Sisters, you would be in Hell within an hour if God did not keep you from it by His Grace. You who think you know Him best need constant supplies of His Grace, else you would fall into the most sorrowful condition. You are dependent upon Him every instant and for everythingfor consistency of life, for the smallest grain of faith, for hope, for love, for peace, for joy, for steadfastness, for courage, for everything! Now, dear Friend, are you fully awake to that fact? Do any of us really feel how weak we are? How sinful we are? What floods of depravity there are pent up within us ready to burst out at any moment? Do we realize what terrible volcanic fires are hidden within our thoughts, as if the fury of Gehenna had entered our nature? And who alone can save us and who does save us? Brothers and Sisters, when you are thoroughly awake to your dangers, to your needs, to your weaknesses, then you will see Christs glory! He is never rightly valued until we see ourselves to be utterly valueless! Low thoughts of self make high thoughts of Christ. Lord, awake us to know what we are, for then shall we begin to see the glories of Your Son!   
We must also be thoroughly awake to the mercies that we are constantly receiving. Thousands of blessings come to us when we are sound asleep in our beds and, oftentimes, we know nothing of many favors that come to us in broad daylightwe are asleep, as it were, concerning them. Think, dear Christian people, of your election! Think of your redemption! Think of your effectual calling, of your cleansing by the precious blood! Think of your washing by the Spirit with water by the Word! Think how you have been held up, supplied, educated, comforted, strengthened! Think of what yet remains for you of peace and joy in this life and of the abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Let your mind contemplate all the mercies that are sure to come to youand bless the Lord for them even before they come, as faith reckons them to be already here. When you are awake to all these mercies, then you will see your Lords glory. All these blessings will make you see what a glorious Saviorwhat an infinitely gracious Lord He is to you! Father of Mercies, wake us up to a sense of Your mercies, that we may see the glory of Jesus in them all!   
And, dear Friends, we ought also to be awake to all manner of holy exercises. For instance, when we are awake to prayer, then we see Christs glory. Often what are our prayers? At morning and night a few hurried sentences, when we are either half-asleep or scarcely awake. I mean that, at night, we are ready to go to sleep over our devotions and we nod even while we pray. And in the morning, when we get up, we have hardly time, through the demands of business, to spend a proper time in fellowship with our Lord. I bless God for our Prayer Meetings, for there is much that is good in them. But do we, even there, pray as we should? Those who speak for us are often graciously helped, but are not those of us who sit silent and who should be praying to God, often thinking of a thousand things instead of our supplications? We cannot expect to meet with Christ while we are in prayer unless we are wide awake! Then think of our singing. Praise is a blessed way of getting near to Christ, but sometimes people sing mechanically, as if they were wound up, like the oldfashioned organs that ground out a tune with painful regularitythe poor pipes knowing nothing, of course, about the sense or the meaning of the musicfor there was no living hand to touch the keys. Yet we sometimes sing like that   
*Hosannahs languish on our tongues,   
And our devotion dies.*

But, oh, when we are thoroughly awake in our singing, then are we able to *Behold the glories of the Lamb   
Amidst His Fathers Throne*   
and then we also *Prepare new honors for His name,   
And songs before unknown.*

Many of us are coming presently to the Table of our Lordwhat will happen if we come there half-awake? Well, we shall not see the glory of Christ in His ordinance! There will be bread and there will be wine, but, to us, there will be nothing more, no body of Christ, no blood of Christ, to be our spiritual meat and drink. The Master will not come and sit down with a company of nodding disciples, all fast asleep around the Table which is the special memorial of His great love to us. When they were awake, they saw His glory. And it must be the same with us, also.

Now I want to press this thought home a little more closely. Brothers and Sisters, if we are fully awake to holy service, then we shall see the glory of Christ. Those among you who live to win souls for Christ, whose soul is all on fire to try and carry the Gospel into some place where as yet it is not known, are certain to see the glory of Christ. While you serve Him, you shall see His face as they do who are with Him in Heaven! I have read a great many biographies of men and women who were full of doubts and fears, but when I have been reading about a man who was full of sacred zeal, one who was wholly consecrated to the service of his Savior, I have found very little about his doubts and fears. Those two seraphic men, Whitefield and Wesley, seemed to have no time for depression of spirits. They were always about their Masters business. They flashed through the earth like flames of fire! They seemed to be so girt about by God with His strength that they rode upon the whirlwind and, consequently, as a rule, they enjoyed the Presence of their Lord and were full of holy delight in Him.

So I believe it will be with those of us who addict ourselves to our Masters service with all our might. If you are doing nothing for Christ, you cannot expect to have His Presence and blessing. But if you are serving Him with all your heart, not from the low motive that you may win something by it, but entirely out of love to Him, then will He come and manifest Himself to you as He does not unto the world! Some Christians walk so slowly that sin easily overtakes them, while Christ goes far before them, for He always walks a good honest pace and likes not the sluggards crawl. And some professors seldom get beyond that pace, so they see but little of Him whom they call Master. If they were awakeawake to His servicethen they would see His glory!

But above all, dear Friends, we must be awake with regard to our Lord Himself. Oh, that our hearts were fully awake to His love! He says to each Believer, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Does our wakeful heart reply, Yes, Lord, that You have? Are we awake to remember all that He did by way of love even to the death for us? Are we so awake as to have continually before us His Divine and Human PersonHis blessed condescending lifeHis wondrous atoning death? Are we wide awake enough awake to know that He is with us now? Do you not think that we are often like the disciples who saw Jesus standing by the sea and knew not that it was Jesus? He comes to us in the way of sickness, in the way of bereavement, in the way of heart-searching! We do not know that it is Jesus, yet it is. Our eyes are blinded because of our sleeping! If we were awake, we would soon perceive His glory. O blessed Savior, by Your Cross and passion, by Your glorious Resurrection and Ascension, awaken all our spirits to perceive that You are not far from any one of Your people and that Your Word is still true, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

III. I must not keep you much longer, but I want to say that THIS DOCTRINE OF THE NECESSITY OF OUR WAKEFULNESS IN ORDER THAT WE MAY SEE THE GLORY OF CHRIST, THROWS A LIGHT ON SEVERAL THINGS.

First, it shows us why some see so little of the glory of Christ. Ah, says one, I used to see it. I could not get through a sermon without being moved at the thought of my Savior suffering for me, and rising for me. But now I do not seem to get any good out of all the services I attend. Whose fault is that? It is not His, for He is unchanged. Is it mine? Perhaps so and yet, since others see him, surely the blame cannot be all mine. Is it not your fault, Friend? You are not as wide awake as you used to be! It is a curious thing when a man says, I do not knew how it is that I cannot see as I used to. Why, he has not got his eyes open! Foolish man, let him awaken himself and when he is thoroughly awake, then his eyes will be as good as ever and he will see as much of his Lords glory as he used to! Old age has not come upon you yet, my Brother, my Sister, though you sorrowfully sing

*Where is the blessedness I knew   
When first I saw the Lord?*   
Let me alter one line of the hymn and then you may sing   
*Where is the wakefulness I knew,   
When first I saw the Lord?*

When you first joined the Church, you were all alive! Every power of your being was full of zeal and earnestness. Do you recollect how you stood in the aisle and never seemed to get tired? You wished that the preacher would keep on for another half-hour. You remember how you could walk several miles to the service, then, and when the minister said, I think you live too far away to worship with us, you replied, Oh, no, Sir! The distance is nothing when I get such food for my soul as I find here. I am glad of the walk. It does me good. Now you write a little note to say that you live so far off that you cannot often come to the services. It also happens that you live far from every other place of worship, too, so you begin to stay away from the House of Godand then do you wonder that you feel no power and no delight in your Lord? Of course you do not, for you are sound asleep! When you awake again, you will see Christs glory. Oh, for wakeful piety, earnest religionand plenty of itno mere sprinkling of Grace, but a thorough immersion into the very depths of it! May the Lord, in His mercy, cause you to be filled with all the fullness of God, by the power of His Spirit, till you shall be carried right away into a holy life that shall write over the natural life of your manhood, I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.

Next, does not this fact explain why, in trials, we often get our sweetest fellowship with Christ? If I might mark out the happiest periods of my life, I would not choose those in which outward mercies have been multiplied and success has followed success. But I think that I would especially note those times when abuse followed abuse, when I could hardly say a word without its being misrepresented and something horrible being made out of things which were as good as good could bewhen lies flew about me as bullets whistle round the warriors ears in the midst of the battle! Then it was that I kept close to Christ and lived on Him, alone, and I was among the happiest of the happy! When the dog barks, then the people of the household wake up and the burglars will not be likely to get in! And, sometimes, our troubles are the very best things that can happen to us because they wake us up and drive Satan away and make us fit us to see Christs glory! We got into a careless, drowsy condition when we were rich and increased in goodsand then we went to sleep. So our Master came and pulled the bed from under us and made us feel the coldthen we woke up and found that Christ was close beside us, and our heart was glad. Thus, affliction or trial is often a blessed means of Grace because it wakes us up so that we see Christs glory.

This fact also explains why dying saints often declare that they have such blessed sights of Christ. Is it not because, as they die, they really begin to live? They shake off the dull encumbrance of this house of clay and they get into a clearer light, and so they truly live. They wake up when they die! All their lifetime their business engagements or other cares occupied their thoughts. But now they have done with business, with care and they begin to awake, for the morning comesthe blessed, everlasting morning that shall never know an eventideand they awake and see the glory of their Lord, and we, who sit by their bedside, are often amazed! We cannot understand what they describe, for we are the sleeping ones, and they are the awakened ones, waking up to see Christs glory!

But suppose that I were to take my text for just a minute and project it a little way into the future? We shall soon fall asleep, Brothers and Sisters. Some of the older ones among us will certainly do so! Others of us very probably will do so, and all of us, unless the Lord shall come first, shall soon fall into that last quiet slumber which we call death. But, what a awakening there will be, first of our soul, when we shall see our Lord as He is! What must the first five minutes in Heaven be if there are any minutes where time is swallowed up in eternity? What must be the joy when, for the first time, we enter that land where they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light? When we shall see the saints in Heaven, I suppose that we shall not say much about them. They will be like Moses and Elijah, the two men that stood with Him. But, oh, when we shall get our first glimpse of Jesus on His Throne, that will be a ravishing sight beyond all conception! And then, when the next awakening comes, when the trumpet sounds its mighty blast, and these poor limbs arise out of their beds of clay, when we are awake, we shall see His glory! Then shall we be satisfied, when we awake in His likeness! And then shall His prayer be answered, Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.

Well, Beloved, be content to go to bed when there is such an awakening in store for you! Learn to die every day. Regard your bed as a tomb and every time you give yourself up to unconsciousness, and the image of death is upon you, be practicing the art of dying, so that when, for the last time, you must go upstairs and lie down once again, it may be very, very sweet to feel, I shall awake in the morning, the everlasting morning, when all these shadows of this night of grief and toil shall eternally have fled away! When I am awake, I shall see His glory!

The Lord grant to you and to me, dear Friends, to know all the bliss of awakening to behold His glory! Amen.   
EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *MATTHEW 17:1-5.*

*[Mr. SPURGEON does not appear to have commented on the chapter read before he preached the foregoing Sermon. It has, therefore, been decided to insert his exposition of the parallel passage in Matthew, as he wrote it for The Gospel of the Kingdom. This will enable his Sermon readers, who do not possess his last literary work, to judge as to the contents of the volume upon which he was at work just eight years ago, within a few days of receiving the call Home. It is one of the most precious of the many memorials of the promoted Pastor.]*

Verses 1, 2. And after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, his brother, and led them up on a high mountain, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. Were these six days a weeks quiet interval in which our Lord prepared Himself for the amazing transaction upon the high mountain? Did the little company of three know from one Sabbath to another that such an amazing joy awaited them? The three were elect out of the elect, and favored to see what no one else in all the world might behold. Doubtless our Lord had reasons for His choice, as He has for every choice He makes, but He does not unveil them to us. The same three beheld the agony in the Garden. Perhaps the first sight was necessary to sustain their faith under the second. The name of the high mountain can never be known, for those who knew the location have left no information. Tabor, if you please. Hermen, if you prefer it. No one can decide. It was a lonely and lofty hill. While in prayer, the splendor of the Lord shone out. His face, lit up with its own inner glory, became a sun! And all His clothes, like clouds irradiated by that sun, became white as the light, itself. He was transfigured before them. He alone was the center of what they saw. It was a marvelous unveiling of the hidden Nature of the Lord Jesus. Then was, in one way, fulfilled the word of JohnThe Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory. The Transfiguration occurred but once. Special views of the glory of Christ are not enjoyed every day. Our highest joy on earth is to see Jesus. There can be no greater bliss in Heaven! And we shall be better able to endure the exceeding bliss when we have laid aside the burden of this flesh.

3. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him. Thus the Law and the Prophets, Moses and Elijah, communed with our Lord, talking with Him, and entering into familiar conversation with their Lord. Saints long departed still live! They live in their personality. They are known by their names and enjoy near access to Christ. It is a great joy to holy ones to be with Jesus. They find it Heaven to be where they can talk with Him. The heads of former dispensations conversed with the Lord as to His decease by which a new economy would be ushered in. After condescending so long to His ignorant followers, it must have been a great relief to the human soul of Jesus to talk with two masterminds like those of Moses and Elijah! What a sight for the Apostles, this glorious trio! They appeared unto them, but they, talked with Him. The objective of the two holy ones was not to converse with Apostles, but with their Master. Although saints are seen of men, their fellowship is with Jesus

4. Then answered Peter and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here. If You will, let us make here three tabernacles; one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. The sight spoke to the three beholders, and they felt bound to answer to it. Peter must speakThen answered Peter. That which is uppermost comes outLord, it is good for us to be here. Everybody was of his opinion. Who would not have been? Because it was so good, he would gladly stay in this beatific state and get still more good from it. But he has not lost his reverence and, therefore, he would have the great ones suitably sheltered. He submits the proposal to Jesus. If You will. He offers that, with his Brothers, he will plan and build shrines for the three holy ones. Let us make here three tabernacles. He does not propose to build for himself, and James, and John, but he says, One for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. His talk sounds rather like that of a bewildered child! He wanders a little, yet his expression is a most natural one. Who would not wish to abide in such society as this? Moses, Elijah and Jesus! What company! But yet how unpractical is Peter. How selfish the one thought, It is good for us! What was to be done for the rest of the twelve and for the other disciples, and for the wide, wide world? A sip of such bliss might be good for the three, but to continue to drink thereof might not have been really good, even for them. Peter knew not what he said. The same might be said of many another excited utterance of enthusiastic saints.

5. While he yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Hear Him. While he yet spoke. Such wild talk might well be interrupted! What a blessed interruption! We may often thank the Lord for stopping our babbling. A bright cloud overshadowed them. It was bright and cast a shadow. They felt that they were entering it and feared as they did so. It was a singular experience, yet we have had it repeated in our own cases. Do we not know what it is to get shadow out of brightness and a voice out of the cloud? This is after the frequent manner of the Lord in dealing with His favored ones. The voice was clear and distinct. First came the Divine attestation of the Sonship of our Lord, This is My beloved Son, and the Fathers declaration of delight in Him, in Whom I am well pleased. What happiness for us that Jehovah is well pleased in Christ and with all who are in Him! Then followed the consequent Divine requirement, Hear Him. It is better to hear the Son of God than to see saints, or to build tabernacles. This will please the Father more than all else that love can suggest. The good pleasure of the Father in the Lord Jesus is a conspicuous part of His glory. The voice conveyed to the ear a greater glory than the luster of light could communicate through the eyes. The audible part of the Transfiguration was as wonderful as the visible!

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THE COMERS CONFLICT WITH SATAN   
NO. 100

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 18, 1856, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**And as he was still coming, the devil threw him down and tore him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the child and**

**delivered him again to his father.   
Luke 9:42**

THIS child, possessed with an evil spirit, is a most fitting emblem of every ungodly and unconverted man. Though we are not possessed with devils, yet by nature we are possessed with devilish vices and lusts which, if they do not distress and vex our bodies, will most certainly destroy our souls! Never was a creature possessed with an evil spirit in a worse plight than the man without God, without Christ and without hope in the world! The casting out of the unclean spirit was, moreover, a thing that was impossible to man and only possible to God. And so is the conversion of an ungodly sinner a thing beyond the reach of human ability and only to be accomplished by the might of the Most High! The dreadful bellowing, foaming and tearing caused in this unhappy child by the unclean spirit are pictures of the sins, iniquities and vices into which ungodly men are continually and impetuously hurriedand a type of that sad and terrible suffering which remorse will, by-and-by, bring to their conscience and which the vengeance of God will soon cause to occupy their hearts. The bringing of this child to the Savior by his parents teaches us a lesson that those of us to whom the care of youth is entrusted, either as parents or teachers, should be anxious to bring our children to Jesus Christ that He may graciously save them! The devout desire and compassion of the father for his child is but a pattern of what every parent ought to feel for his offspring. Like Abraham, he should pray, O that Ishmael might live before You! And he should not only put up prayer, but also strive in the use of the means to bring his child to the Pool of Siloam, that haply the angel may stir the stream and his son may step into the water and be made whole! The parent should place his offspring where the Savior walks, that He may look upon him and heal him. The coming of the child to Christ is a picture of saving faith, for faith is coming to Christsimply believing in the power of His Atonement. And lastly, the casting down and tearing which is mentioned in my text is a picture of the comers conflict with the enemy of souls. As he was still coming, the devil threw him down and tore him.

Our subject this morning will be the well known fact that coming sinners, when they approach the Savior, are often thrown down by Satan and torn so that they suffer exceedingly in their minds and are well nigh ready to give up in despair! There are four points for our consideration this morning. That you may easily remember them, I have made them alliterativethe devils doings, designs, discovery and defeat.

I. First, THE DEVILS DOINGS. When this child came to Christ to be healed, the devil threw him down and tore him. Now this is an illustration of what Satan does with most, if not all sinners. When they come to Jesus to seek light and life through Him, Satan throws them down and tears them. Allow me to point out how it is that the devil causes those extraordinary pangs and agonies which attend conversion. He has a multitude of devices, for he is cunning and craftyand he has many different ways of accomplishing that end.

1. First of all he does this by perverting the Truth of God for the destruction of the souls hope and comfort. The devil is very sound in Divinity. I never suspected him of heterodoxy yet! I believe him to be one of the most orthodox individuals in Creation. Other people may disbelieve the Doctrines of Revelation, but the devil cannot, for he knows the Truth of God and though he will often belie it, he is so crafty that he understands that with the soul convinced of sin, his best method is not to contradict the Truth, but to pervert it. Now I will mention the five great Doctrines which we hold to be most prominent in Scriptureby the perversion of each of which the devil tries to keep the soul in bondage, darkness and despair.

First, there is the great Doctrine of Electionthat God has chosen to Himself a number that no man can number, who shall be holy, since they are ordained to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Now the devil agitates the coming soul upon that Doctrine. Oh, he says, perhaps you are not elect. It is of no use your coming and struggling and striving. You may sit still and do nothing and yet be saved, if you are to be saved. But if your name is written among the lost, all your praying, seeking and believing cannot save you! Thus the devil begins preaching Sovereignty in the sinners ear, to make him believe that the Lord will assuredly cut him off. He asks, How can you suppose that such a wretch as you can be elect? You deserve to be damned, and you know it! Your brother is a good moral man, but as for you, you are the chief of sinners! Do you think God would choose you? Then if the tempted one is instructed that election is not according to merit, but of Gods Free Will, Satan opens another battery and insinuates, You would not feel like this if you were one of Gods elect. You would not be allowed to come into all this suffering and pray so long in vain. And again he whispers, You are not one of His, and thus attempts to throw the soul down and tear it in pieces. I would just like to have a blow at his schemes, this morning, by reminding our friends that when they come to Christ, they never need puzzle themselves about the Doctrine of Election! No one, in teaching a child the alphabet, makes him learn Z before he has learned A. So a sinner must not expect to learn election until he knows faith. The text with which he has to understand is thishe that believes on the Lord Jesus shall be saved. And when the Lord has enabled him to learn and believe that, he may go on to thisElect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. But if he cannot shake off the subject from his mind, he need not do it, for he may remember that every penitent is elect, every Believer is elect! However great the sinner, if he does but repent, that is a

proof that he is elect! If he does but believe on Christ, he is as certainly elect as his faith is genuine! I cannot tell that I am elect before I know whether I believe in God. I cannot tell a thing unless I see its effects. I cannot tell whether there is a seed in the ground unless you enable me to stir up the soil, or to wait till I see the blade shooting from under the earthso I cannot tell whether your name is written in the Lambs Book of Life until I see Gods love manifested in you in the stretching out of your hearts towards God! I cannot disembowel the deep rocks of obscurity to find out hidden things unless evidences and effects furnish me with spade and mattock. There is a newspaper in Glasgow called the Christian News, alias, the Un-Christian News or Christian Waspand the editor says of me, that I am not fit to preach Gods Word because I do not know (can you guess what it is?) who Gods elect are! He writes words to this effectAccording to his own confession, the young man does not know who Gods elect are until he has asked them questions and knows their character. Well, if I did, I would be marvelously wise, indeed! Who can know them apart from those signs, marks and evidences in the heart and life which God always vouchsafes to His elect in due time? Shall I unlock the archives of Heaven and read the rolls, or, with presumptuous hands, unfold the Lambs Book of Life, to know who are Gods elect? No! I leave that for the editor of the Christian News to doand when he publishes a full and correct list of the electno doubt it will be bought up tremendously and the printer will speedily make a fortune by it! Let not the soul be distressed about election, for all who repent and believe do so as the effect of their election!

The next Doctrine is that of our depravitythe Total Depravity of Manthat all men are fallen in Adam, that they are all gone aside from the Truth and that, moreover, by their practice they have become full of sin. That in them dwells no good thing and that if any good thing shall ever come there, it shall be put there by God, for there is not even the seed of goodness in the heart, much less the flower of it. The devil torments the soul with that Doctrine. He says, See what a depraved creature you are? You know how dreadfully you have sinned against God! You have gone astray ten thousand times. See, he says, there are your old sins still crying after you. And he waves his wand and gives a resurrection to past iniquities which rise up like ghosts and terrify the soul! There, look at that midnight scene! Remember that deed of ingratitude? Listen! Do you not hear that oath echoed back from the walls of the past? Look at your heart, can that ever be washed? Why, it is full of blackness! You know you tried to pray, yesterday, and your mind roved to your business before you were half through your prayer! And since you have been seeking God, you have only been half in earnest, knocking at the door, sometimes, and then afterwards giving it up. It is impossible you should ever be forgiven! You have gone too far astray for the Shepherd to find youyou are altogether filthyyour heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked and you cannot be saved. Many a poor soul has had a most terrible tearing with that Doctrine. I have felt something of it, myself, when I have verily thought that I must be torn in pieces by the dread remembrance of what I had been! The devil throws the sinner down and pulls him almost limb from limb by persuading him that his guilt is heinous beyond parallel and his iniquities are far beyond the reach of mercyand his death warrant is signed! Ah, poor Soul, get up againthe devil has no right to throw you down! Your sin cannot be too great for Gods mercy! It is not the greatness of sin that can cause any man to be damned if there is not a lack of faith! If a man has faith, notwithstanding all the sins he may ever have committed, he shall be saved! But if he has but one sin without faith, that one sin shall utterly destroy him. Faith in the blood of Christ destroys the sting of sin. One drop of the Saviors precious blood could extinguish a thousand flaming worlds if God should will it! How much more can it put out the burning fears of your poor heart! If you believe in Christ, you shall say to the mountain of your guilt, Be you removed far from here and cast into the depths of the sea.

Then, there is the Doctrine of Effectual Calling, or, Irresistible Grace that God calls His children effectuallythat it is not the power of man which brings us to Godbut it is the work of God to bring man to Divine Grace! That He calls those whom He would save with an effectual and special call which He vouchsafes only to His children. There now, says the Evil One, the minister said there must be an effectual call. Depend upon it, yours is not such a call, it never came from God! It is only a few heated feelingsyou were excited a little under the sermonand it will all be gone, directly, like the morning cloud or the early dew. You have strong desires, sometimes, but at other seasons they are not half so vehement. If the Lord drew you, you would be always drawn with the same power. It will be over, soon, and you will be all the worse for having been inclined to go to God under these legal convictions and then, afterwards, running away from Him! Well, Beloved, tell Satan that you dont know whether it is an effectual call, but you know this, that if you perish, you will go to Christ and perish only there! Tell him you know it is so effectual that you cannot help going to Christthat whether it is to last or not, you cannot sayyou will let him know, by-and-by, but that you are resolved (for this is your last defense), if you perish, to perish at the Cross of Christ! And so, by the help of God, you may, by some means, overcome him when he throws you down on that Doctrine.

The devil will also pervert the Doctrine of Final Perseverance of the Saints. Look, says Satan the children of God always hold on their waythey never leave off being holy, they persevere. Their faith is like the path of the Just, shining more and more unto the perfect dayand so would yours be if you were one of the Lords. But you will never be able to persevere. Dont you remember six months ago, when you were lying on a sick bed, you resolved to serve God and it all broke down? You have vowed many times that you would be a Christian, but it has not lasted a fortnight! It will never do, you are too fickle! You will never keep fast hold on Christ. You will go with Him a little while, but you will be sure to turn back. Therefore, you cannot be one of the Lords, for they never turn back! And so he tries to pull and tear the poor soul on that great and comforting Doctrine. The same nail on which a sinner must hang his hope, Satan tries to drive into the very temples of his faith, that he may die like Sisera in the tent of Jael! Oh, poor Soul, tell Satan that your perseverance is not yours, but that God is the Author of itthat however weak you are, you know your weaknessbut that if God begins a good work, He will never leave it unfinished. And repelling him thus, you may rise up from that throwing down and tearing which he has given to you!

Then there is the Doctrine of Limited Atonement with which the unclean spirit will assault the soul. Oh, says Satan, it is true Christ died, but not for you! You are a peculiar character. I remember the devil once made me believe that I was one, alone, without a companion. I thought there was no one like myself. I said that others had sinned as I had done and had gone as far and bad, but I fancied that there was something peculiar about my sin. Thus the devil tried to set me apart as if I did not belong to the rest of mankind! I thought that if I had been anybody else, I might have been saved. How often I wished I had been a poor swearing drunk in the streets and then, I thought, I might have a better chance. But as it was, I thought I was to die alone, like the deer in the shade of the forest. But well do It remember my friends singing that sweet hymn

*His Grace is Sovereign, rich and free,*

*And why, my soul, why not for thee?*   
One of the hymns in Denhams selection and it ought to have been in Rippons, as well as I can remember, it ends like this

*He shed His blood so rich and free,*

*And why, my soul, why not for thee?*   
That is just the question we never put to ourselves. We say, Surely, my Soul, why not for anybody else but you? Up, poor Soul! If Satan is trying to tear you, tell him it is written, He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. Tell Satan that, whoever comes, He will in no wise cast out. And it may be that thus God will deliver you from that desperate conflict into which, as a coming sinner, you have been cast.

2. But Satan is not very scrupulous and he sometimes throws the coming sinner down and tears him by telling horrible lies. Some of you may not have known this, and I thank God if you do not understand some of the things of which I am about to speak. Many a time when the soul is coming to Christ, Satan violently injects infidel thoughts. I have never been thoroughly an unbeliever but once, and that was not before I knew the need of a Savior, but after it. It was just when I wanted Christ and panted after Him, that all of a sudden the thought crossed my mind which I abhorred, but could not conquer, that there was no God, no Christ, no Heaven no Hell! I thought that all my prayers were but a farce and that I might as well have whistled to the winds or spoken to the howling waves! Ah, I remember how my ship drifted along through that sea of fire, loosened from the Anchor of my faith which I had received from my fathers. I doubted everything, until, at last, the devil defeated himself by making me doubt my own existenceand I thought I was an idea floating in the nothingness of obscurity! Then, startled with that thought and feeling that I was substantial flesh and blood, after all, I saw, by Gods grace, that God was, and Christ was, and Heaven was, and Hell was and that all these things were very Truths of God! I would not be astonished if many, here, have been upon the very verge of infidelity and have doubted almost everything. It is when Satan finds the heart tender, that he tries to stamp his own impression of infidelity upon the soul. But, blessed be God, he never accomplishes it in the truly coming sinner!

He also labors to inject blasphemous thoughts and then tells us they are ours. Has he not sometimes poured in most vehement torrents of blasphemy and evil imaginations into our hearts, which we ignorantly thought must be our own? Yet not one of them, perhaps, belonged to us. I remember when I, once, was alone, musing on God, when all of a sudden it seemed as if the floodgates of Hell had been loosened! My head became a very pandemoniumten thousand evil spirits seemed to be holding carnival within my brain and I held my mouth lest I should give utterance to the words of blasphemy that were poured into my ears! Things I had never heard or thought of, before, came rushing impetuously into my mind and I could scarcely withstand their influence! It was the devil throwing me down and tearing me! Ah, poor Soul, you will, perhaps, have that, too. But remember, it is only one of the tricks of the arch-enemy! He drives his unclean beasts into your field and then calls them yours. Now, in old times, when tramps and vagrants troubled a parish, they whipped them and then sent them on to the next parish. So when you get these evil thoughts, give them a sound whipping and send them away! They do not belong to you if you do not indulge thembut if you fear that these thoughts are your own, you may say, I will go to Christ, and even if these blasphemies are mine, I will confess them to the great High Priest, for I know that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.

3. Then if the devil cannot overcome you, there, he tries another method. He takes all the threatening passages out of Gods Word and says they all apply to you! He reads you this passage, There is a sin unto death; I do not say that you should pray for it. There, says the devil, the Apostle did not say he could even pray for the man who had committed certain sins! Then he reads that sin against the Holy Spirit shall never be forgiven. There, he says, in your character you have committed sin against the Holy Spirit and you will never be pardoned. Then he brings another passageLet him alone; Ephraim is joined unto idols. There, says Satan, you have had no liberty in prayer lately. God has let you alone. You are given unto idolsyou are entirely destroyed! And the cruel fiend howls his song of joy and makes a merry dance over the thought that the poor soul is to be lost! But do not believe him, my dear Friends. No man has committed the sin against the Holy Spirit as long as he has Divine Grace to repent! It is certain that no man can have committed that sin if he flies to Christ and believes on Him! No believing soul can commit it! No penitent sinner ever has committed it. If a man is careless and thoughtlessif he can hear a terrible scream and laugh it off and put away his convictionsif he never feels any strivings of consciencethere is a fear that he may have committed that sin. But as long as you have any desires for Christ, you have no more committed that sin than you have flown up to the stars and swept cobwebs from the skies! As long as you have any sense of your guilt, any desire to be redeemed, you cannot have fallen into that sin. As a penitent, you may still be saved, but if you had committed it, you could not be penitent.

II. Let me dwell for a moment or two upon the second pointthe DEVILS DESIGN. Why does he throw the coming soul down and tear it?   
First, because he does not like to lose it. No king will willingly lose his subjects, said Apollyon to Christian when he stretched himself across the road, and I swear you shall go no farther; here will I spill your soul. There he stood vowing vengeance at him because he had escaped from his dominion. Do you suppose that Satan would lose his subjects, one by one, and not be angry? Assuredly not! As soon as he sees a soul hurrying off to the Wicket Gate, with his eyes fixed on the Light, away go all Hells dogs after him! There is another of my subjects leaving. My empire is being thinned. My family is being diminished. And he tries with all his might and main to bring the poor soul back again. Ah, Soul, dont be deceived by him! His design is to throw you downhe does not tell you these things to do you good, or to humble youbut in order to keep you from coming to Christ! He tries to decoy you into his net, where he may utterly destroy you.   
Sometimes, I believe, he has the vile design of inducing poor souls to kill themselves before they have faith in Christ! This is an extreme case, but I have met with not a few who have been thus tempted to take away their lives and rush before their Maker with their hands red with their own blood! Satan knows full well that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. But he has never accomplished his design in the soul of one elect sinner yet!   
Then Satan has another motive. When the soul is coming to Christ, he tries, out of spite, to worry that soul. Satans heart is made up of that which is just the opposite of benevolencemalevolencehe hates everything and loves nothing. He hates to see any creature happy, any soul glad. And when he sees a soul conning to Christ, he says, Ah, I have nearly lost him. I shall never have an opportunity of bringing thundering condemnation into his ears and dragging him about in the flames of Hell as I thought. And now, before he is gone, I will do somethingthe last grip shall be a hard onethe last blow shall be dealt with all my power. And down he comes upon the poor soul who falls wallowing upon the earth in despair and doubt. Then he tears him and will not leave him until he has worked as much of his way with him as the Lord will let him. Dont be afraid, Child of God! Resist the devil and he will flee from you. And even though he may cast you to the ground, remember that the righteous falls many times, but he rises up again! And so shall youand the designs of the enemy shall be frustrated, as it is written, Your enemies shall be found liars unto you.  
III. In the third place, there is the DEVILS DISCOVERY. I do not think the devil would be able to throw one poor sinner to the ground if he came as the devil. But it is seldom he does that. He presents himself to us as an angel of light, or even as the Holy Spirit! He knows that the Holy Spirit does all the work of salvation and, therefore, he tries to counterfeit the operations of the Holy Spirit. He knows it is the Holy Spirits work to take away pride from man and to humble the soul. Well, Satan counterfeits that blessed work and takes away hope from man as well as pride. Under the pretense of humbling the poor sinner and telling him that he ought to lie lower in the dust, he not only humbles the poor soul but puts it down so low that he dishonors God, too, in the sinners estimation, by telling him that God, Himself, cannot save him. Satan will try, if he can, to mar Gods work. While it is yet upon the potters wheel, he puts on his own instrument while the clay is whirling round upon the wheel, that it may not assume the Holy Spirits shape, but that there may be some marks of the devils workmanship in the article! Sometimes you ask God that you may be able to agonize in prayer. That is right, says Satan, agonize in prayer. But remember, you must receive the mercy now, or you are lost. So he glides in and adds a little piece to the Truth, making you believe it is an impulse of the Holy Spirit, while it is, after all, a deception of the Father of Lies! The Holy Spirit tells you that you are a lost sinner and undone. Ah, says the devil, you are and you cannot be saved! And thus, again under the very garb of the Spirits operations, he deceives the soul. It is my firm belief that very much of the experience of a Christian is not Christian experiencemany Christians experience things that have nothing to do with Christianity, but more to do with demonology! When you read the convictions of John Bunyan, you may think that all that terror was the fruit of the Holy Spiritbut be assured it was the fruit of Satanic influence! You may think it is Gods Holy Spirit that drives sinners to despair and keeps them shut up in the iron cage so long. Not at all. There was Gods Holy Spirit and then Satan came in to mar the work if he could.   
Now I will give the poor sinner a means of detecting Satan, so that he may know whether his convictions are from the Holy Spirit or merely the bellowing of Hell in his ears. In the first place, you may always be sure that that which comes from the devil will make you look at yourselves and not at Christ. The Holy Spirits work is to turn our eyes from ourselves to Jesus Christ, but the Enemys work is the very opposite. Nine out of ten of the insinuations of the devil have to do with ourselves. You are guilty, says the devilthat is self. You have not faiththat is self. You do not repent enoughthat is self. You have got such a wavering hold of Christthat is self. You have none of the joy of the Spirit and, therefore, cannot be one of Histhat is self. Thus the devil begins picking holes in uswhereas the Holy Spirit takes self entirely away and tells us that we are nothing at all, but that   
*Jesus Christ is All-in-All.*   
Satan brings the carcass of self and pulls it aboutand because it is corrupttells us that most assuredly we cannot be saved. But remember, Sinner, it is not your hold of Christ that saves youit is Christ! It is not your joy in Christ that saves youit is Christ! It is not even faith in Christ, though that is the instrumentit is Christs blood and merits! Therefore, look not so much to your hand with which you are grasping Christ, as to Christ! Look not to your hope, but to Christ, the source of your hope! Look not to your faith, but to Christ, the Author and Finisher of your faith! As you look at yourself, the meanest of those evil spirits may tread you beneath his feet. Look, therefore, to Christ!   
You may discern the devils insinuations in another waythey generally reflect upon some attribute of God. Sometimes they reflect upon His love and tell you that God will not save you. Sometimes upon His longsuffering and they tell you, you are too old and that God wont save you. Sometimes upon His Sovereignty and they tell you that God does not choose as He wills, but that He has respect to characters and takes men according to their merits. Sometimes they reflect upon Gods Truth and they tell you that He will not keep His promise. Yes, and sometimes they reflect upon the very Being of God and tell you that there is not such a One. But O poor trembling Soul, Satan shall not get an advantage over youbut take caredetect him! And when you have found out the devil, you have frustrated his aims as far as you are, yourself, concerned.

IV. Now, in the last place, we have to consider the DEVILS DEFEAT. How was he defeated? Jesus rebuked him. Beloved, there is no other way for us to be saved from the castings down of Satan but the rebuke of Jesus. Oh, says one poor soul, many months and years have I been distressed for fear I should not be saved. I have gone from place to place in hopes that some minister might say something which should rebuke the evil spirit. Sister, or beloved Brother, have you not been doing wrong? Is it not Jesus who rebukes the evil spirit? Or perhaps you have been trying to rebuke the evil spirit yourself!. You have tried to argue and dispute with him. You have said that you are not so vile as he described you to be. Beloved, have you not been doing wrong? It is not your business to rebuke SatanThe LORD rebuke you, that is what you should say. Oh, if you had looked to Jesus and said, Lord, rebuke him, He had only need say, Hush! and the demon would have been still in a moment, for he knows how Omnipotent Jesus is, since he feels His power. But you get to striving to pacify your own heart when you are under these temptations, instead of remembering that it is only Jesus who can remove the affliction. If I had one here who suffered the most from this ailmentthe possession of SatanI would say to him, Beloved, sit down. Remember Jesus. Go to Gethsemane and, depend upon it, the devil will never stay there with you! Think on the agonies of your Savior covered with His blood. The devil cannot bear Christs bloodhe goes howling away at the very thought of it! Go to the pavement where Christ endured the accursed flagellation. The devil will not stay long there with you. And if you sit at the foot of His Cross and say   
*Oh, how sweet to view the flowing,   
Of His ever precious blood,*   
you will not long find the devil vexing you! It is no use to get simply to praying. Prayer is good, in itself, but that is not the way to get rid of Satanit is thinking of Christ. We get to saying, Oh, that I had stronger faith! Oh, that I had love to Jesus! It is good for a Christian to say that, but it is not enough. The way to overcome Satan and to have peace with God is through Christ, I am the Way. If you would know the Way, come to Christ. I am the Truth. If you would refute the devils lies, come to the Truth. I am the Life. If you would be spared from Satans killing, come to Jesus. There is one thing which we, all of us, too much becloud in our preaching, though I believe we do it very unintentionallynamely, the great Truth that it is not prayer, it is not faith, it is not our doings, it is not our feelings upon which we must restbut upon Christ and on Christ alone! We are apt to think that we are not in a right state, that we do not feel enough, instead of remembering that our business is not with self, but Christ. Our business is only with Christ!   
O Soul, if you could fix your soul on Jesus and neglect everything elseif you could but despise good works and all else, so far as they relate to your salvation and look wholly, simply on Christ, I tell you Satan would soon give up throwing you down! He would find it would not answer his purpose, for you would fall on Christ and, like the giant who fell upon his mother, the earth, you would rise up each time stronger than before. Do I have, then, within hearing, one poor tried, tempted, devildragged soul? Has Satan been pulling you through the thorns and briers and thickets until you are scarred and bruised? Come now, I have tried to preach a rough sermon to you because I knew I had rough work to do with roughly-used souls! Is there nothing here, poor Sinner, that you can lay hold upon? Are you so locked up that not one ray of light comes through the iron bars? What? Are you so chained that you cannot move hand or foot? Why, Man, I have brought you a pitcher and a piece of bread, today, even in your dungeon! Though you are cast down, there is a little here to comfort you in what I have said. But oh, if my Master would come, He would bring more than that, for He would rebuke the unclean spirit and it would immediately depart from you! Let me beseech you, look only to Christnever expect deliverance from self, from Satan, from ministers, or from means of any kind apart from Christ1 Keep your eyes simply on Him. Let His death, His agonies, His groans, His sufferings, His merits, His glories, His intercession be fresh upon your mind. When you wake in the morning look for Him! When you lie down at night look for Him! Oh let not your hopes or fears come between you and Christ. Seek only Christ! Let the hymn we sang, be your hymn and your prayer   
*Lord, deny me what you will,   
Only ease me of my guilt,   
Prostrate at Your feet I lie,   
Give me Christ, or else I die.*   
And then, even though the devil throws you down and tears you, it were better he should do so, now, than that he should tear you forever.   
I have some here, however, who will laugh at what I have been preaching this morning. Ah, Sirs, you may do so. But bitter though my text may be, I wish you had it in your mouths. Though sad is the experience of being torn when coming to Christ, I had rather see you so than see you whole, away from Christ! It is better to be torn in pieces coming to the Savior, than to have a sound, whole heart away from Him! Tremble, Sinner, tremblefor if you come not to Christ, He shall tear you at the last. His eyes shall not pity, neither shall His hands spare you! He has said, Beware you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. Sirs, within another hour some of you may know this! Certainly, before long there are some who will be torn in pieces by the wrath of God! Why will you die? Why will you die? You cannot answer the question! But let it rest upon your hearts. What profit will you have in your own blood? What will you profit if you gain the whole world and lose your soul? Remember, Jesus Christ can save even you! Believe on His name, you convinced sinners, believe on Christ! The Lord bless you, for Jesus sake! Amen.

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 #1746 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE DEVILS LAST THROW   
NO. 1746

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, JUNE 10, 1883, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

On an evening when the regular hearers   
left their seats to be occupied by strangers.   
**And as he was still coming, the devil threw him down, and convulsed him. Luke 9:42.**

OUR Lord Jesus Christ taught the people much by His Words, but He taught them even more by His actions. He was always preachingHis whole life was a heavenly discourse on Divine Truthand the miracles which He worked were not only the proofs of His Deity, but the illustrations of His teaching. His wonders of mercy were, in fact, acted sermons, truths embodied, pictorial illustrations appealing to the eyes and thus setting forth Gospel teaching quite as clearly as vocal speech could have done. When we read of the miracles of our Lord, we should not only accept them as proofs of His Deity and seals of His commission, but as instructions as to the manner of His gracious working.

What He did of old to the bodies of men should be received as a prophecy of what He is, today, prepared to do to the souls of men. I am sure I shall not be straining the meaning of the text, or the intention of the miracle, if, instead of preaching about the youth possessed of the devil and dwelling only upon that wonderful display of power, I endeavor to show that there are parallel cases, at this time, in the world of men. Jesus is able to work in the unseen spirit-world miracles such as were foreshadowed by those which He worked in the visible natural world. I suppose that we have never seen Satanic possession, although I am not quite sure about it, for some men exhibit symptoms which are very like it. The present existence of demons within the bodies of men I shall neither assert nor deny, but certainly, in our Saviors day it was very common for devils to take possession of men and greatly torment them.

It would seem that Satan was let loose while Christ was here below that the serpent might come into personal conflict with the appointed Seed of the womanthat the two champions might stand foot to foot in solemn dueland that the Lord Jesus might win a glorious victory over him. Since his defeat by our Lord and by His Apostles, it would seem that Satans power over human bodies has been greatly limited. But we have, still, among us the same thing in another and worse shape, namely, the power of sin over mens minds. That this is akin to the power of the devil over the body is clear from holy Scripture. The god of this world has blinded the eyes of them that believe not. The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience, says the Apostle Paul.   
Satan works in all ungodly men, as a smith at his forgedo you wonder that they sometimes curse and swear? These are only the sparks from the forge below, flying out of the chimney. The Evil One is found cooperating with evil natures, finding fire for their tinder, blowing up the flame that is within them and, in every way, assisting them and exciting them to do evilso that, albeit men are not possessed of devils in the sense in which they were so in Christs dayyet the Evil One still has power over them and leads them wherever he desires. Do we not constantly meet with persons of this kind? I do. I know passionate men in whom the fiercest of devils appear to rave and rage! And I could point out others whose love of lying betrays the presence of the father of lies!

One blasphemes and uses such filthy language that we are sure his tongue is set on fire from Hell, even if the prince of devils is not ruling it. A man says, Drink is ruining me, body and soul. I know that it is shortening my life. I have had delirium tremens and I know that I shall have them again if I continue as I ambut I cannot leave the drink. Sometimes the craving comes over me and I seem as if I must swallow the intoxicating drink whether I will or not. Whether this is the devil, or whether it is altogether the man, himself, I am not going to arguebut the drink-devil, whose name is Legion, is certainly among us this day and we hear persons tell us that they are anxious to escape from its powerand yet they return to it, rushing to intoxication as the swine rushed into the sea when the demons had entered into them!

Need I mention another form of this evil in the shape of unchastity? How many a man there isalas, it is true of women, too!struggling against a fierce passion and yet that passion conquers them! The unclean desire comes upon them like a hurricane bearing all before it and they yield to it as the sere leaf yields to the blast. No, morethey rush into a sin which they, themselves, condemnof which they have already tasted of the bitter fruit! They could not be more eager for it if it were the purest of all enjoyments! As the moth dashes again and again into the candle, which has burned its wings, so do men and women hurry into the vice which has filled them with misery! They are possessed and domineered over by the spirit of lust and return to their crimes as the oxen return to the stream.

I need not go further into details, for one man falls into sin in one way, and another falls after quite a different fashion. All devils are not alike though they are all alike evil. Anger differs from lust and profligacy laughs at covetousness, yet they are all of one brood, privates in the same dreadful legion. Men practice differing sins, but their sins all manifests the same evil power. Unless Christ has set us free, we are all, in some shape or other, under the dominion of the Prince of Darkness, the master of the forces of evil! This poor young man of whom we are to talk, tonight, was brought into a most horrible condition through the influence of a Satanic spirit. He was a lunatichis reason had been dethroned! He was an epileptic, so that if left alone he would fall into the fire or into the water.

You have yourself seen persons in fits of epilepsy and you know how dreadful would be their danger if they were taken in a fit in the middle of a street, or by the side of a river. In this youths case, the epilepsy was only the means by which the demon exercised his power and this made the boys condition seven-fold worse than if it had been simply a disease. This afflicted one had also become deaf and dumb, and very violent, so that he was capable of doing a great deal of mischief. In all the Holy Land there was only one who could do anything for him! There was one name by which he could be cured, and only one! It was the name of Jesus! The Lord Jesus had disciples who had worked miracles in His name, but they were baffled by this extraordinary case. They tried what they could do, but they were utterly defeated and gave up the task in despair.

And now there remained only one Person beneath the canopy of Heaven that could touch this childs case and drive out the devil. Only one Person could now answer the poor fathers prayersevery other hope was dead. That is just the state in which we arethere is but one name under Heaven whereby we must be saved! Many are the pretended salvations, but only one is real

*There is a name high over all,   
In Hell, and earth, and sky.   
Angels and men before it fall,   
And devils fear and fly.*

That one name is the name of Jesus, the Son of God, to whom all power is given! He is God and can deliver any man from the dominion of evil, whatever form it may have assumed, and however long established the dominion may be. There is no cure besides His. Nothing else can rescue a man from the thralldom of his sin but the Word of Jesus. When the Word of power is spoken from His Divine mouth, all things obeyand none out of the millions of voices on earth can deliver us from evil. We are shut up to Heavens unique remedyGod grants that, being so shut up, we may avail ourselves of it.

This poor lad, although nobody could cure him but Jesus, had a father that loved him and nobody could tell the sorrow of that fathers heart because of his poor son. The father had a sharp struggle to get his son to the disciples, for epileptic persons who are also insane are hard to manage. I cannot tell how many round about assisted to hold him, all pitying the poor creature. But alas, the Lord Jesus Christ was away! The parents heart was heavy when he found that the great Healer to whom he looked was, for a while, absent. But when Jesus came down from the mountaintop, the poor demoniac had this one great advantagethat he had friends to aid in bringing him to Christ.

I hope that all here who are not saved are privileged with relationship to some friend who seeks their salvation. Perhaps it is a wife who cannot bear that her husband should remain out of Christ, or a husband who pines till his spouse is turned to the Lordin either case it is a great help. How often a mother bears a secret anguish in her breast for her unconverted sons and daughters! I have known a sister in the family to be the only one who knew the Lordand she has pleaded with the Lord day and night, entreating Him to bless the whole of her household. Frequently a servant in the house becomes its best helper, or it may be a neighbor who has seen the ungodly conduct of his neighborswho never ceases to pray for them. When some few get together to bring an especially hard case before Jesus, it is blessed workfor desperate cases grow hopeful under the influence of prayer. Come, you saved ones, pray with me, now, for these unrenewed sinners, that at this moment they may feel the power of our Lord Jesus!

I. So, then, my first point shall be that OUR HOPES ARE ALL AWAKENED. Here is a poor youth, but as bad as he is terribly possessed, he is coming to Christ! Prayer has been offered for him by his father and Jesus is near. All looks well! We will take the case of a sinner who is in a similar condition. Prayer has been offered for him and that prayer has, in some measure, been heard. We have in this congregation, I trust, some who are coming to Christ and I am right glad of it! Coming to Christ, however, is not the best possible condition, for the best condition is to have already come to Him. For a hungry man to be coming to a dinner is not enough he must actually reach the table and eat. For a sick man to be coming to an eminent physician is hopeful, but it is not enoughhe must get to that physician, take his medicine and be restored.

That is the point. To be coming to Christ is not enoughyou must actually come to Him and really receive Himfor to such only does He give power to become the sons of God! This poor child was coming and so are some herethat is to say, they have begun to hear the Gospel with attention. They did not, before, go anywhere on the Sabbath nor did they get up very early on a Sunday morning. I can see a man who seldom rose on a Sunday morningand when he did, he read his newspaper! You might see him, anytime before one oclock, in his shirtsleeves. Half this city of London is in that condition every Sunday morning because they look upon the day as simply their own daynot the Lords Day. They have very short memories and do not remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy. They forget all about its being the Lords Day and do not reverence it. This is shameful conduct towards God!

If a man on the road were to meet with a poor beggar and give him six out of the seven shillings he had with him, the beggar would be a wicked wretch if he afterwards knocked the man down and stole the other shilling. Yet there are multitudes of people to whom God gives six days out of sevenbut nothing will satisfy them but they must have the seventh all to themselves and rob God of it! The man I refer to is repenting of this wrong and, so you see him coming upon the Sunday morning to hear the Gospel. He hears it very attentively. He leans forward to catch every word and he treasures up what he hears. We are sure that he is coming to Christ, for when he gets home, he reaches for his Bible. He has begun to read the Word of God in an earnest way! He thought, at one time, that it was about the dullest book in the world. He even dared to turn it into a jest and all because he never read itfor those who deny the Inspiration of Scripture are almost always people who have never read it for themselves!

It is a book which carries conviction within itself to candid minds when they carefully peruse it. Assuredly this man is coming to Christ, for he searches the Scriptures. I feel sure he is coming to Christ, for he has begun to mend in many respects. He has dropped his frequent attendance at his usual place of worship, namely, the public house. He keeps more at home and is, therefore, sober. Plenty of people in London need no bell to fetch them into the temples of their gods. We see in some of our churches and chapels persons going in 20 minutes or half-an-hour after service beginsbut look at the temples of Bacchus at one oclock, and at six in the evening, and see how punctual are his votaries! The worshippers of liquid fire stand outside till the shrine is openedthey are afraid of being late! They are so thirsty that they long for the time of the deadly libation. Drink seems to be the water of life to them, poor creatures that they are!

But now our friend of whom we are so hopeful is not seen waiting at the posts of the doorsthe Blue Posts, I mean. Thank God! He is looking to another Fountain for comfort. Note, also, that he has dropped his blasphemy and his unchastity. He is a purer man in mouth and body than he used to be. He is coming to Christ. But, as I said, coming is not enough. The thing is to really reach the Lord Jesus and to be healed by Him. I pray you, do not rest short of this! Still, this is all hopeful, very hopeful. The man is a hearer. He is also a reader of the Scriptureshe has begun to mend a bitand now he is a thinker, too, and begins to be a little careful about his soul. While he is at his labor, you can see that there is something working in his brain, though once it was filled with vanity and wickedness.

He has a weight, too, at his heart, a burden on his mind. He is evidently in earnest, as far as he knows the teaching of Scripture, because he is deeply affected by it. He has learned that he will not cease to exist when he dies, but that he will continue to be when yonder sun becomes black as a burnt-out coal! He knows that there will be a day of judgment, when throngs upon throngs, yes,

all the dead, shall stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of the things which they have done in the body. He has though this over and he is alarmed. He chews the cud upon the Divine Truth of God and finds time for solitary meditation. That man is coming to Christ, for there is no better evidence of the face being set towards Christ and Heaven than a thoughtful state of mind!

And I have heardof course I cannot tell, for I was not there to seeI have heard, I say, that the other night he began to pray! If so, I know that he is coming to Christ, for prayer is a sure token. He has not yet cast himself fully at the feet of Jesus, but he cries, Lord, save me. He is coming and I am as glad as the birds on a spring morning! The angels are watchingthey are leaning from the battlements of Heaven to see whether it will end rightlyand you and I are very hopeful, especially those of us who have been praying for this man, for since we see that there is some change in him and he has begun to think and pray, we look for his salvation, as men look for flowers when April showers are falling! So, you see, our hopes are excited.

II. And now I will read the text againAnd as he was still coming, the devil threw him down, and convulsed him. By this OUR FEARS ARE AWAKENED. What a sight it must have been! Here is the poor father bringing his lunatic son and friends are helping him. They are getting him near the Savior, and he is just coming to Him who can cure him, when, all of a sudden, he is taken in a fearful fit, worse than he has ever suffered before. He is cast down, thrown about, dashed to and frohe wallows on the groundhe seems to be flung up and down as by an unseen hand! We fear that he will be torn to pieces. Look! He falls down like a dead man and there he lies. As the crowd gathers around him, people cry, He is dead!

Does it not seem a dreadful thing that when hope was at its brightest all should be dashed aside? I have observed this thing scores of times! I might say, I think without exaggeration, hundreds of times. I have seen men, just when they were beginning to hear and beginning to think, taken, all of a sudden, with such violence of sin and so fearfully carried away by it, that if I had not seen the same thing before, I should have despaired of them! But, having often seen it, I know what it means and I am not so dismayed as a raw observer might be, though I must confess that it half breaks my heart when it happens to some hopeful convert whom I hoped to receive into the Church and to rejoice over. We mourn when we hear that the man who was somewhat impressed has become worse than before and has gone back to the very vice from which we had rescued him. The case runs on the same lines as our textAs he was still coming, the devil threw him down, and convulsed him.

How does the devil do this? Well, we have seen it done in this way When the man had almost believed in Christ, but not quite, Satan seemed to multiply his temptations around him and to bring his whole force to bear upon him. There is a wicked man in the shop and the devil says to him, Your friend is beginning to be seriousridicule him! Tempt him all you can. Treat him to strong drink. Get him away to the theater, the music hall, or the brothel. It is amazing how the ungodly will lay all kinds of traps for one who is escaping from his sins! They are fearfully set on keeping him from Christ. This is a free country, is it not? A wonderfully free country when a Christian man in the workshop has to run the gauntlet for his very life to this day. A man may swear, drink and do what he likes that is detestableand is there ever a word of rebuke for him. But the moment he begins to be serious and thoughtful, the wicked are down upon him like so many dogs on a rat!

The devil finds willing servants and they worry the poor awakened oneis there any wonder that, as he has not yet found Christ and is not yet saved, he should, for the time, be carried away by these assaults and feel as if he could not go further in the right road? I have known, in addition to all this, that Satan has stirred up the anxious ones bad passions. Passions that lay asleep have suddenly been awakened. Moreover, the man has become thoughtful and from that very fact, doubts which he never knew before have come upon him. He begins to mend and now he finds a difficulty in getting his needle through where the tear was made. He finds that tearing is easier work than mendingand that running into sin is a much more easy thing than rising out of the black ditch into which he has fallen. So now, what with those about him tempting him, his bad passions responding to the temptation and his doubts clouding everything up, it is not a marvelous thing that the poor creature grows worse before he gets better!

The disease, which before had been concealed in more hidden and vital parts, seems to be thrown out upon the surface and the sight is sickening! This, however, is not always a bad sign. Doctors rather prefer it to an inward festering. So have I seen it when men have been coming to Christ their boat has been tossed with tempestand they have been driven far out upon a raging sea. Yes, and I will tell you what I have seen. I have seen a man almost convertedwell-near a believer in Christall of a sudden become more obstinate in his opposition to the Gospel than ever before. A man that was quiet and harmless and inoffensive before, has, under the influence of Satan, just when we hoped the best things of him, turned round in a rage against the people who sought to do him good. And he has spoken evil of the Gospel which a little while before he seemed anxious to understand.

Sometimes such persons act as if they were reckless and profane, just as boys, when they go through a graveyard, whistle to keep their courage up. Many a man says big things against the Gospel when he is pretty nearly caving in and he does not want anybody to know that he is beaten. He is coming to Jesus, but still he does not want anybody to see that he is and, therefore, he pretends to an opposition which is not sincere. Have you not discovered that a man is never so violent against a thing as when he is unwillingly convinced of the truth of it? He has to try and demonstrate to himself that he does not believe it by being very loud in his declarationsa secret something in his soul makes him believe and he is mad because he cannot resist the inward conviction.

Do not be astonished, you that are trying to bring men to Christif it should often happen that these lunatics break loosethat these epileptics have a worse fit just before Christ cures them than ever you knew them to have had! I will describe the usual way in which the devil throws men down and tears, or convulses them. You need not listen to this unless you like, because it does not relate to all of you herebut it is true of a sufficient number to render it necessary for me to speak of it. It is a very curious thing that if there is a poor soul in London that is well-near insane through despair of heart, he wants to talk to me. I am often sorely burdened by the attempt to sympathize with the distracted. I do not know why they should be attracted to me, but they come to tell me of their evil state of mindpeople who have never seen me before. This fact gives me a wide field of actual practice and careful observation.

I frequently meet with persons who are tempted with blasphemous thoughts. They have not yet laid hold on Christ, but they are trying to do so. And at this stage of their experience, most horrible thoughts pass through their minds. They cannot prevent itthey hate the thoughts and yet they come till they are ready to lose their reason. I will tell you what happened to me. I was engaged in prayer in a quiet place one day when I had just found the Savior and while I was in prayer a most horrible stream of blasphemies came into my mind, till I clapped my hand to my mouth for fear that I should utter any of them! I was so brought up that I do not remember ever hearing a man swear while I was a child, yet at that moment I seemed to know all the swearing and blasphemy that ever was in Hell, itself, and I wondered at myself! I could not understand from where this foul stream came.

I wrote to my venerable grandfather who was, for 60 years, a minister of the Gospel, and he said to meDo not trouble about it. These are no thoughts of yours. They are injected into your mind by Satan. The thoughts of man follow one another like the links of a chainone link draws on anotherbut when a man is in prayer the next natural thought to prayer is not blasphemy! It is not, therefore, a natural secession of our own thoughts. An evil spirit casts those thoughts into the mind. I also read in an old book what they used to do years ago in our parishes in the good old times when nobody had any sense of humanity. If a poor wretch came to a parish begging, they whipped him through the place and sent him on to his own parish. Thus should we treat these diabolical thoughts! Whip them by hearty penitence and send them off to where they came fromback to their own parish, which is far down in the deeps!

Thoughts of this sort, seeing you loathe them, are none of yours. Do not let Satan lay his brats at your door, but send them packing! Perhaps when you know this, it may help to break the chain, for the devil may not think it worth his while to worry you in this way any more, when he cannot, by this means, lead you to despair. He seldom wastes his time in spreading nets when the bird can see them. Therefore, tell Satan to be gone, for you can see him and you are not going to let him deceive you. It may be he will take the hint and leave. When this does not answer, I have known Satan to throw the coming sinner down and convulse him in another way. There, he says, did you not hear the preacher speaking about election? You are not one of the elect! Perhaps I am not, says one. Perhaps you are, I say, and I think that whether you are one of the elect or not, you had better come on the ground that Jesus saysHim that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.

If you come, He will not cast you outand then you will find that you are one of the elect! You need not trouble about predestinationyou will see that, clearly enough, very soon. If any man had a ticket to go to a meeting and he said, I do not know whether I am ordained to get in or not, I should think it very probable that he was not ordained to enter if he sat at home in the corner and did not make the attempt to go! But if, having his ticket, he walked to the place and went in, I should feel sure that he was ordained to go in! You will know your election when you have obeyed your calling! Go to Christ because you are commanded and invited, and leave the deeper question to be answered by the facts! Satan will throw men down and convulse them in another way. Ah! he says, you are too big a sinner! I make short work of that. No man is too big a sinnerAll manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.

Oh but, says Satan, it is too late. Another lie of his! It is never too late so long as we are in this world and come to Jesus for pardon! Generally, in the case of young people, he winds the clock back and says, It is too soon. And then when they get old, he winds the clock ahead and says, It is too late. It is never too late as long as Jesus lives and the sinner repents. If a sinner were as old as Methuselah, if he came to Christ and trusted Him, he would be saved. Oh but, the devil says, it is no use your trying at all. The Gospel is not true. Yes, but it is true, for some of us have proved it. I could bring before you, tonight, if it were necessary, men and women who lived in sin and wallowed in itand yet the Lord Christ has saved them by His precious blood! They would rejoice to tell you how they have been delivered from the reign of sin by faith in Jesus, though they could never have delivered themselves. The Gospel is true! Our converts prove it. Conversion is the standing miracle of the Church and while we see what it works every day in the week, we are confident and sure.

When men that were passionate, dishonest, unchaste and covetous become holy, gracious, loving, pure and generous, then we know that the Gospel is true by the effect which it produces! A lie would never produce holiness and love! Out of the way, devil! It is all in vain for you to come here with your lies! We know the truth about you and about the Gospel and you shall not deceive us! And then the devil will come with thisIt is of no use. Give it up. Give it up! Many and many a man who has been on the brink of eternal life has been thrown down and convulsed with this It is of no use. Give it up! You have prayed and you have not been answerednever pray again! You have attended the house of God and you have become more miserable than evernever go again! Ever since you have been a thinking man and a sober man, you have had more trouble than you ever had. See, says the devil, what comes of your religion?

Thus he tries to induce the newly awakened to give it up. But oh, in Gods name let me implore you, do not turn from it, for you are on the brink of the grand discovery! Another turf turned and there is the golden treasure! After all your strivingyour long strivingnever give up the search until you have found your Savior, for your Savior is to be found! Trust in Him this night and He is yours forever!

III. I shall not detain you much longer. But as our hopes have been awakened and our fears have been awakened, let us look on the scene till OUR WONDER IS EXCITED. Did you notice, when I was reading in the 9th chapter of Mark, how Jesus healed this poor child? He did heal himHe healed him of all those complicationshealed him of the devils domination; healed him of the epilepsy; healed him of being deaf and dumb; healed him of being a lunatic; healed him of pining away! In one moment that young man was completely saved from all his ills! He could speak! He could hear! He was cured of his epilepsy and was no more a lunatic, but a happy rational being! The whole thing was done at once. Wonder and never leave off wondering!

Can a man be changed all at once? It must take a long time, says one. I admit there are certain qualities which come only by education and patient watchfulness. There are certain parts of the Christian character that come of culture and must be watered with tears and prayer. But let me assure you, not as a matter of theory, but as a matter which I have seen for 30 yearsa mans character may be totally changed in less time than it takes me to tell you of it! There is such power in the name of Christ that if that name is preached and the Spirit of God applies it, men can be turned right around. There can be a total reversal of all their conduct and, what is more than that, of all their inclinations, desires, wishes, delights and hatesfor God can take away the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh! The child of darkness can be translated into the Kingdom of Light! The dead heart can be quickened into a spiritual existence and that in a single moment, by faith in Jesus Christ!

When that poor epileptic child was healed, it is said that the people were amazed. But how much greater will be our amazement if we see the Lord Jesus work such a miracle upon you! You have struggled to get better. You have prayed to get better and all seems to be unavailing. Now, just trust Christ, the blessed Son of God who reigns in Heaven, who died for sinners and now lives for sinners! Only trust Him and this blessed deed is doneyou become a new creature in Christ Jesusand commence a holy life which shall never end. This wonder can be performed now! This cure was perfected at once and it remained with the youth. The most charming point about it was that the Lord Jesus said, You dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you, come out of him, and enter no more into him. Enter no more into himthere is the glory of it! Though the epileptic fit was ended, yet the young man would not have been cured if the devil had returned to take possession of him again. The Saviors cures endure the test of years!

Enter no more into him preserved the young man by a lifelong word of power. I never dare to preach to anybody a temporary salvation. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, not for merely tonight, but forever! When God saves a man, he is savednot for weeks and years, but eternally! If Christ turns the devil out of him, he shall enter into that man no more, forever! Now this is a salvation that is worth your having and worth my preaching! A temporary, I had almost said, a trumpery salvation, that saves a man for a few months and then lets him perish, is not worth preaching or having! But that which so makes a man new as to put into him, a well of water springing up into everlasting lifethat is worth worlds!

I will tell you a story of Christmas Evans which I like to tell on this point. Christmas Evans was once describing the prodigals coming back to his fathers house, and he said that when the prodigal sat at the fathers table, his father put upon his plate all the daintiest bits of meat that he could find. But the son sat there and did not eatand every now and then the tears began to flow. His father turned to him and said, My dear son, why are you unhappy? You spoil the feasting. Do you not know that I love you? Have I not joyfully received you? Yes, he said, dear Father, you are very kind, but have you really forgiven me? Have you forgiven me altogether, so that you will never be angry with me for all I have done? His father looked at him with ineffable love and said, I have blotted out your sins and your iniquities, and will remember them no more forever. Eat, my dear son.

The father turned round and waited on the guests, but by-and-by his eyes were on his boy. They could not be long removed. There was the son weeping again, and not eating. Come, dear child, said his father, come. Why are you still mourning? What is it that you need? Bursting into a flood of tears a second time, the son said, Father, am I always to stay here? Will you never turn me out of doors? The father replied, No, my child, you shall go no more out forever, for a son abides forever. Still the son did not enjoy the banquet. There was still something rankling within and, again, he wept. Then his father said, Now, tell me, tell me, my dear son, all that is in your heart. What do you desire more? The son answered, Father, will you make me stay here? Father, I am afraid lest, if I were left to myself, I might play the prodigal again. Oh, constrain me to stay here forever! The father said, I will put my fear in your heart, and you shall not depart from me. Ah! then, the son replied, it is enough, and merrily he feasted with the rest!

So I preach to you just thisthat the great Father, when He takes you to Himself, will never let you go away from Him again. Whatever your condition, if you trust your soul to Jesus, you shall be saved, and saved forever

*Once in Christ, in Christ forever*

*Nothing from His love can sever.*   
But what if we fall into great sin? asks one. You shall not abide in great sin. You shall be kept and preserved by that same power which has begun the good work, for it will surely carry it on even to the end.

Just two or three sentences and I have finished. I have been speaking about the devil throwing some down and tearing, or convulsing them when they are coming to Christ. Are there any of you who do not know anything about it? Well, I am glad that you do not. If you come to Christ without being thrown down and convulsed I am glad of it. I have endeavored to help those that are terribly tormentedbut if you are not so tried, do not wish to be! There were here, this morning, two or three of the good fish-people from Newhaven, and when I saw them in their picturesque costumes they reminded me of a story that I heard about an old fishwife who used to live near Edinburgh. A young man visited her and began speaking to her about her soul. She was going out and she took up her great load of fish to carry on her back, much more than most men would like to carry.

The young man said to her, Well, you have got a great burden there, good woman. Did you ever feel a spiritual burden? She put down her load and said, You mean that burden which John Bunyan speaks about in the Pilgrims Progress, do you not? Yes, he said. Well, she said, I felt that burden before you were born and I got rid of it, too! But I did not go exactly the same way to work that John Bunyans pilgrim did. Our young friend thought that she could not be up to the mark to talk so, for he fancied that John Bunyan could not make a mistake. Well, she said, John Bunyan says that Evangelist pointed the man with the burden on his back to the wicket gate and when he could not see the gate, Evangelist said, Do you see that light? And he looked till he thought he saw something like it. You are to run that waythe way of that light and that wicket gate.

Why, she said, that was not the right direction to give a poor burdened soul! Much good he got out of it, for he had not gone far before he fell into the Slough of Despond, up to his neck in the mire, and was almost swallowed up! Evangelist ought to have said, Do you see that Cross? Do not run an inch, but stand where you are and look to thatand as you look, your burden will be gone! I looked to the Cross at once and lost my load. What! said the young man, did you never go through the Slough of Despond? Yes, she said, I have been through it far too many times. But let me tell you, young Friend, that it is a deal easier to go through the Slough of Despond with your burden off than it is with your burden on!

There is much blessed truth in this story! Do not any of you be saying to yourselves, How I wish I could get into the Slough of Despond! If you say that, you will get in and then you will say, How I wish I could get out of the Slough of Despond! I have met with persons who fear that they never were saved because they have not experienced much terror. I meet with others who say that they cannot be saved because they experience too much terror! There is no pleasing people. Oh that they would look to Jesus whether or no! After I was preaching Jesus Christ from this platform once, there came a man into the vestry who said to me, Blessed be God that I entered this Tabernacle. I come from Canada, Sir. My father, before he found true religion had to be locked up in a lunatic asylum, and I always thought that I must undergo a similar terror before I could be saved. I said, No, no, my dear Friend, you are to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you do that, despair or no despair, you are a saved man.

This Gospel I preach to you! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust Him quietly, humbly, simply, immediately. Trust Him to make you a holy manto deliver you from the power of the devil and the power of sinand He will do it! I will be bound for Him that He will keep His Word. Jesus is Truth, itself, and never breaks His Word. He never boasts that He can do what He cannot do! He has gone into Heaven and He is, therefore, able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them. Only trust Him! Trust Him to overcome the evil you have to fight! You will conquer it, Man, if you will only trust Jesus! Woman, there is hope for you if you will trust the wounded, bleeding, dying, risen, living Savior! He will battle for you and you shall get the victory!

God bless you, everyone, and may we all meet in Heaven to praise the Son of God forever and ever! Amen.   
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Sermon #2463 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

WHY MEN REJECT CHRIST   
NO. 2463

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, MAY 3, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, APRIL 11, 1886.

**And sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. Luke 9:52, 53.**

YOU hardly need that I should explain this action of the Samaritans. Probably our Saviors nearest road to Jerusalem lay through Samaria and He did not avoid that district, as many Jews did who went a long way around rather than pass through that unfriendly country. The Lord Jesus was so gentle, so meek and lowly, so much more a Man than a Jew, that it is somewhat strange that the Samaritans did not make an exception in His favor and treat Him courteously when He passed through their land. He, Himself, was quite free from all bigotry and was glad to mingle with all sorts of men, whatever their nationality. He sent His messengers to the Samaritan village to say that Jesus of Nazareth was passing through and wished to lodge there for a nightbut they refused Him because it appeared to be His intention to go up to Jerusalem to keep the feast and it was their opinion that the feast ought to be kept in their own temple on their own mountain, Gerizim. Therefore, because the Christ was going up to the Jewish feast at Jerusalem, they would not receive Him. They were guilty of gross inhospitality in thus refusing to entertain a servant of God, for He was that in the esteem of many of them. And they were also guilty of still greater inhospitality which they did not understand, for they refused to receive the Son of God who, in human flesh, had come down to bless the sons of men!

I do not mean to say much about Samaritans in my discourse, for we have little or nothing to do with them, but I am going to use the text with reference to ourselves. I am sure that there is, here, a picture of many to whom I am now speaking.

I. First, I would remind you that the LORD JESUS CHRIST STILL SENDS MESSENGERS TO THE SONS OF MEN BEFORE HE COMES.   
Before He comes, Himself, He sends His heralds. His own personal coming to the earth was heralded by a long line of Prophets and especially by John the Baptist. And when He had come into the world, He did not usually enter a place without giving some kind of notice to the inhabitants. He frequently sent before Him either evangelists, by two and two, to go into every place where He, Himself, would come, or else He commissioned certain messengers to give notice that the Christ of God was on His way to pay a visit of mercy. I believe that, nowadays, the Lord Jesus Christ comes to many men in a very surprising manner. Before they are aware of it, His Grace steals into their heartsHe says to many what He said to Zacchaeus, Make haste and come down, for today I must abide at your house. He speaks out of Heaven to some as He did to Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus. He has differing ways with different men, but often, and with the most of us, He sends His messenger before Him before He comes Himself.   
The message that we who are Christs messengers have to bring is thiswe have to tell who He is that has come among the sons of men, asking for entertainment in their hearts. Brothers and Sisters, it is God, Himself, the Lord of Glory, who has appeared in human flesh and has become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He has come in the fashion of a Man. He has lived and loved and labored here below. He has died, He has been buried, He has risen again, He has gone back into Glory and now, spiritually, He is present among us! Here is His own declaration, Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. We preach not to you, a merely human teacherwe preach One who is certainly Human, but who is also Divine. We preach not, only a Teacher, but a Savior who offered Himself without spot to God that He might put away the sin of all who believe in Him. And now, in the message of the Gospel, He comes again into our midst, even He whom angels worship, who is His Fathers joy, the delight of His people, the hope of all who have a living hope, the pattern and the mirror of what His saints are yet to be! It is He of whom we speakJesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, who is also very God of very God!   
As His messengers, we have further to say that He is willing to come and dwell in mens hearts. The messengers who came to that Samaritan village proclaimed the good tidings, The Christ is coming! The Christ is coming! He is willing to come and lodge with you. I think the loungers at the gate were, at first, astonished that the great Miracle-Worker should come to their village, to the Samaritans with whom the Jews had no dealings! And they went in and said to the people, Jesus, who healed the sick, and raised the dead, is willing to come and stay a night with us. We tell you, dear Friends, that the Lord Jesus is willing to come to you, that He will be glad to find admission at the door of your hearts! It were good news if we could tell you that He would let you come to Him, but we tell you something better, that isthat He is willing to come to you! It were good news if we said, If you entreat Him, if you beseech Him, if you constrain Him, He may, perhaps, come and stay an hour with you. But instead, thereof, we can come and say, Our Master bids us tell you that He is willing to be received by you and that to as many as receive Him, to them will He give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name! Oh, what glad tidings for your sinful hearts that the pure Christ is willing to come and live in you! Oh, what good news for you guilty men that the pardoning Christ is willing to come and take a lodging within your spirits! Tell it to one another wherever you dwell. Tell the good news that Jesus comes, not to pass by, nor even to sojourn merely for a night, but to come and take possession of the heart forever!   
These messengers of Christ were also to tell the people to make ready for His coming. According to our text, Jesus sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. Make ready, then, for the coming of Christ into your hearts. But, you say, we cannot entertain Him as such a King should be entertained. It is true, Beloved, you cannot. But remember that this royal Guest asks nothing of you but that you give Him room to abide in your heart. The Master still says, as He did of old, Where is the guest chamber? He does not ask you to provide the fare for the feast, but only to prepare the guest chamber. He still says, 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. Our great Melchizedek, when He comes to meet us, brings with Him the bread and the winethe bread, His bodyand the wine, His blood. He gives us food to eat that the world knows not. Whatever preparation you have to make is

not a matter that is beyond your power!   
I will tell you what to do to make ready for Christgive Him a room that is empty. Drive out the sin that rules there, or rather, ask Him, by His Grace, to come and drive out His enemy and yours. If you are willing to have him driven out, Christ is both willing and able to drive him out. Say to the Lord, Here is my heart, such as it is. It is all Yours. If you really say that from your heart, you are ready for Him! Tell Him that you grieve over your sin, for repentance will make you ready for Christ. Tell Him that you are a lost sinner and that your sense of need has made you ready to be saved by Him. Tell Him that you are willing to be renewed by His Grace. Tell Him that you desire to be holy, that you wish to be cleansed in His precious bloodthis is the kind of readiness which Christ wants! The best preparation for a feast is hungerthere is no sauce like it. Readiness for being clothed is to take off your rags. Readiness to be washed is to see, and lament, and abhor your filthiness! Readiness to receive alms is to take the place of a beggar and to confess how poor you are. So, you see, I have asked no hard thing of you when, as the messenger of my Lord, I tell you that the King, Himself, draws near, even the Incarnate God, and that He is willing to enter into your heartsand that all the readiness that He asks of you is that you open the door to let Him in!   
But, my Brothers and Sisters, the messengers of God have come to some of you a great many times. I wonder whether some of you can remember the first sermon that ever made you weep? Do you remember the first holy book that awakened your sleeping conscience? Can some of you unconverted people call to mind your mothers tears and your fathers prayers for you? You will have, as it were, to swim through the river of your mothers tears if you are resolved to go to Hell. Some of you will have to ride roughshod over your fathers entreaties before you will be able to reach Hell! You have been called many times. You have been invited again and again! Take heed lest, one day, even the Christ should say, Because I have called and you refused and I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded, but you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would have none of My reproof, I, also, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes. The messengers of God and the messages of God are not to be trifled with! Sickness, losses, convictions of conscience and a thousand other things are messengers from the Most High! Let us not trifle with them any longer, but even now, as the Christ sends out His messengers, let us receive them gladly and say to them, Tell your Master that we shall be glad if He will come to us.   
II. Now, secondly, it appears from the test that although Christ sends out messengers to announce His approach, THERE ARE SOME WHO WILL NOT RECEIVE HIM.   
These Samaritans would not receive Him and alas, the people who will not receive Christ are still very many! One would be glad to preach until midnight to sinners who would receive the Saviorno exhaustion would we mind if we could but preach to people willing to welcome our Master! We cannot make it out why some of you do not receive Christ as your Savior. There is so much about you that is hopeful and good that we cannot understand why you refuse Him. There are such blessings attached to the reception of Christeven eternal life hangs on itthat it puzzles us how you can bar your door against this blessed Friend of oursyet so it is.   
Let me put it to you, dear FriendsI would like to buttonhole you, to take you by the hand and to say to you, God has sent His Son to be the Messiah, the Mediator between Himself and youwhy do you deliberately turn away from Him? He sent that dear Son of His into the world to save sinners and, in order that He might save them, He died in unutterable pangs upon the Cross! Do you really refuse to be saved by the merits of that matchless death? Is it so that you will both tempt the justice of God and reject the mercy of God? The plan of salvation cost God His darling Son! Do you mean, in indifference, to say that you care not what it cost? Will you fling the Atonement to the winds and have nothing to do with it? Well, then, what I ask of you is just thisto really make this decision with deliberation if you are resolved to be lost. But I am not half as much afraid of you who would thus reject Christ as I am of the many who will not even think of Himwho take up neither one position nor another but who let the whole subject slip by with a neglect that is a thousand times more contemptuous towards Christ than even if they had thought it out and had decided not to believe it. O Sirs, do not, I pray you, neglect the Christ of God and refuse Him whom God has sent to save you!   
But there are some who never think about Christ at all. The year rolls on with scarcely a thought of Him. Look on the vast mass of Londons population never going to any House of Prayer to hear about Jesus. There is but little reading of the blessed Book which tells us of Him! One might imagine that they regarded it as all old wives fables, or a dream from the Arabian Nights. Yet they do not go quite that length, for they have not thought enough about it even to say as much as that! What? Shall Christ die and yet you do not think His death worth a thought? Shall He, with His pierced hands, open the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers and will you not even look to see what He has done? Oh, how shall I plead with you? Would God that I had voice and heart commensurate to so stern a labor as that of pleading with consciences that go to sleep and hearts that lie dead in the Presence of a bleeding Christ!   
There are also, alas, many who, though they do think of Christ, yet reject the plan of salvation by the great Substitute. They cannot see it, they saythey mean that they will not have it! They do not care to be saved by the atoning Sacrificethey would sooner trust in something else. Oh, dear Friends, I am sure that if you would work that problem out with a little care, you would soon come to a different resolve! I remember, when under deep conviction of my guilt, with a strong desire to be better and to have peace with God, I tried prayer. I tried Bible reading. I tried diligent attendance to the means of Grace. I tried a change in my manner of life. I tried everything I could think of, but I never could find peace and rest until I cast myself on Christs atoning work and trusted Him to save me! Then did I enter into the peace of God and found a joy and rest of spirit which I would not barter for all the crowns of all the kings who ever lived! I entreat you to think much of the sufferings of our Lord and consider what they meant. And I should not wonder that you will, at length, fall in love with the great plan of redeeming mercy by which Christ was made to suffer in our place, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree! At any rate, do give a full and fair consideration to Gods way of salvation. Make room for it in your heart. Be ready to entertain the Savior, at least go as far as thisweigh His claims, judge His doctrine, see whether there is not about His atoning Sacrifice something of promise which is not offered anywhere else.   
Yet it would not be sufficient, even if I could bring you to think of Christ and to judge somewhat more favorably concerning Him. I long oh, that I had power to work this miracle, but I have notI long to open some sinners heart to let the Savior in! I know who will be the man who will be the first to welcome Christ. He who has no righteousness of his own! He who longs to escape from the wrath to come. I think I hear him say, Sir, you put a question to me and I will put one to you. You say, Will you open your heart for Christ to enter? O Sir, that is not the question! My heart is ready enough to receive Him, but can I hope that He will come in? Soul, there was never a heart, yet, that was willing to have Christ but Christ gave Himself to that heart! There is no question about His willthe question is about your will. He has said, Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. Now, if I were struck dumbif this throat were choked up, from which for so many years has pealed forth as with the sound of a trumpet the Gospel of Christ, I should like my last words to be, Come to Christ just as you are! Never was a soul repulsed that came to Him, though black as midnight, though guilty of enough crimes to condemn it to all eternity! Only come to Jesus! Be willing and obedient, and you shall have Christ, for it is written, Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely. The Lord make all of you willing this very hour!   
III. But now, thirdly, CHRIST IS OFTEN REFUSED FOR THE MOST ABSURD REASONS.   
The Samaritans did not receive Him because He was going up to Jerusalemso that theirs was a sectarian reason. They were Samaritans and He was siding with the Jews. I think that sectarianism anywhere is an evil thing, but let no man ruin his soul for the sake of being a sectarian! If I were the strictest Churchman, I would rather go to Heaven through hearing the Gospel preached by a Dissenter than I would be lost in order to remain a staunch member of the Established Church! And if I were a Dissenter, I would sooner go hear the Gospel fully preached in the Church of England and find Christ, there, than I would go and sit down in my own conventicle and listen to a sort of semi-Unitarianism of modern thought. The first and chief thing for my souls good is that I must have Christ and, for my part, I care not where I find Him! Whether it is in a barn or in a cathedral, He is the same Christ to me. I would meet Him on the mountains brow if He bade me go there, but I would also meet Him on the surface of the lake if He said to me as He said to Peter, Come. Anywhere with Jesus, all is well! But away from Jesus, all is ill. Let nobody, then, refuse to accept Jesus Christ because of sectarian bigotry.

Was it not also for a proud reason that the Samaritans rejected Jesus Christ? What right had these Samaritans to dictate to the Messiah where He should go? If He chose to go to Jerusalem, had He not a right to go where He pleased? How often we, also, try to dictate to Christ! We think that He ought to save us this way, or that way. O Sirs, be willing to let the sinners Savior save the sinner in His own way! Never dictate to Him who is Lord of all, nor reject Him through foolish or wicked pride!   
It was a selfish reason, too, that made these Samaritans refuse to receive Christ. Dog-in-the-manger-like, they would not accept Christ, themselves, but they did not want Him to go to Jerusalem. I have sometimes heard it said, If this Gospel is preached to the scum of society, to the outcast and the low, I am not going to hear it. Ah, my fine gentleman, you will not have it, yourself, and you do not want others to have it. I would be glad to come to Christ side by side with the foulest harlot who ever rotted into infamy! I would be glad to come to Christ with a criminal who was standing with the rope about his neck, about to be hurled into eternity by the common hangman! I would be glad enough to come to Christ with the poorest, meanest beggar who ever picked foul crusts from off a dunghill! So long as I can but get to Christ, who am I that I should find fault with my company? Come, Sirs, away with your pride! Yes, My Lady, or My Lord, you must come to Christ like anybody else! He cares nothing for earthly stars and garters, or honors and titles. He died to save sinners, even the very chief of themand you are not in a fit state to be saved until you come down to the level which you think, now, so much beneath you, but which is, indeed, the true level upon which we must stand if we are to close in with Christ. O pitiful Samaritan pride and selfishness, unwilling that Christ should go to the despised Jews, for the proud Samaritan thinks, If He comes to me, He ought to go to nobody else.

I do not think there ever was a good reason for not believing in Christ. I believe that the most unreasonable things in all the world are doubt and unbeliefin fact, atheists and infidels are the most gullible persons living! The modern scientist who does not believe in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis and who pours scorn upon the New Testament, believes things infinitely more incredible than he can ever detect in Sacred Scripture! I do not hesitate to say that the whole theory of evolution is more monstrously false and foolish than any other ever conceived beneath high Heaven! It is a marvelous thing that men should be able to squeeze their minds into the belief of an absurdity which, in time to come, will be ridiculed to children in the schoolroom as an instance of the credulity of their ancestors. As one science, falsely so-called, has passed away, devoured by the next notion that men have adopted, so shall it be to the end of the chapter. He who will not believe God shall be the dupe of lies, but there is no good and valid reason why men should not accept the Christ.

You dear people who believe your Bibles and listen to the Gospel from week to weekyet who do not accept Christ as your Saviorare the most unreasonable of all people! If this Gospel is true, why do you not receive it? If Christ is the Savior of sinners, why do you not believe in Him? I could understand your casting your Bibles behind your backs and never coming to a House of Prayer again, however greatly I might lament such conduct, but I cannot understand the diligent hearer of the Word who commends and approves it all, yet never believes in Christ to the salvation of his soul! These Samaritans would not receive Christ and they gave as the silly reason for their rejection of Him that He was going to Jerusalemand many who do not receive Christ must give equally unreasonable reasons for their unreasonable conduct!

IV. Now I must close by noticing that JESUS STILL ACTS VERY MUCH AS HE DID THEN.  
First, He does not send fire from Heaven to consume those who reject Him. James and John came to their Master, when the Samaritans would not receive Him, and said to Him, Lord, will You that we command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them, even as Elijah did? Oh, dear! Well might the Master rebuke them, and say, You know not what manner of spirit you are of. But have not I seen men so eager to convert their fellow men that they would even bully them to Christ? There never yet was a man bullied to the Savior! Men do not believe in Christ through being threatened and coerced. Persecution is the devils work from beginning to end and it never succeeds and never will. The Savior gives us no permission to put it in action! He abhors it, for it is not at all according to His mind.   
What, then, did the Master do? As He would not bring fire from Heaven upon the people who rejected Him, so also He would not force Himself upon them. Now, if you, my dear Hearer, do not accept Christ, you may not at once drop down deadyou may not find your house on fire when you get home or you may not become a beggarthat is not Gods way of dealing with those who reject Christ! I have heard of an impious man who said, If there is a God, let Him strike me dead. It was because He is God that He did not take the wicked man at his word! Why should He? It is not according to the nature of God to act after that fashion. While you are in this world, listening to Gods terms of mercy and Grace, if you choose to receive Christ it shall be a blessed thing for you. But if you refuse Him, there is not one of us who would lay a finger upon you to harm you, or who would desire that you should suffer in your mind, your person, or your estate! Our Lord and Master would not treat you so and He will not force Himself upon you.   
When these Samaritans would not receive Him, He did not say, Come, John, James and Peter, we will burst open the village gateswe will enter their homeswe will claim the lodging to which we have a right. Oh, no! That was not His way of working! The Lord Jesus Christ must be served willingly if He is served at all. And He must be received cheerfully if He is received at all. In many cases those who received Christ when He was upon the earth received Him gladly, and that is the only reception which He desires. Forced Christianity would be no Christianity! One volunteer here is worth 10,000 pressed men! Indeed, Christ will have no pressed menall His soldiers must be volunteers. There is a delightful pressure of His Grace, but that never violates the will of man, though it sweetly inclines that will towards Christ.   
What did the Master do when these Samaritans rejected Him? He went elsewhere. We read that they went to another village. I fancy that I can see the Master and His little band of disciples waiting outside that village gate as the sun is going down. The Samaritans ask, Is He going to Jerusalem? Yes, He is. Then they tell Him that He cannot enter, He may go away and they will not entertain Him. He says not a word. He utters no complaint, but He just goes quietly down the hill, the little band following at His heels, and He walks away until He knocks at the gate of another village where they lodge Him for the night. That is all that will happen if you reject HimHe will go somewhere else.   
But when I say that is all that will happen, it is a very great, all. It is a very dreadful, all, for my Master never seems to me more terrible than in His gentleness. You have refused Him, so He is going away. No thunder peals to alarm you, no lightning dashes to destroy you. Only He is going away! There is more terror in that going away than there would be in the tempest! One day, my Hearer, if you continue to reject Jesus Christ, when you shall be in another world, you will have to read, written in letters of fire above your head, these words, He came to you and you would not receive Him, so He went to another. In the parable of the wedding feast, they that were invited, with one voice, began to make excuses and the Master of the house, being angry, said to His servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. Is it not an amazing thing that, even when the Master was angry, He only did a kind thing to show His anger? And, dear Hearer, when Christ shall turn away from you because you refuse to receive Him, it will be only that He may turn somewhere else.   
When Dr. Hawker was preaching, once, a learned man from London, who had listened to him, said, I could not make heads or tails of the mans talk. Someone told the doctor what had been said. Ah, he remarked, I daresay the learned man could not understand the Truth of God I was preaching, but there were scores of old women in the aisles who could. So, if there are some who will not have Christ, there are plenty of others who will! If you who are rich, or learned, or great, will not have Him, He will give Himself away to the poorest, the lowest and the meanest who will accept Himand they shall be in the bosom of their God at last, while you who were too proud to come to Him shall be cast away forever. O my dear Hearers, He stands before the door of your heart right now! He is gently knocking, not with a sledge hammer, but with His own pierced hand! Admit Him, admit Him, I beseech you! Admit Him at once! If not, it may be that He will never knock again. Probably He never again asked those Samaritans to welcome Him, but some other Samaritans did receive Him. He might reasonably have expected to be received by these villagers, but inasmuch as they said no to Him, He just turned His face from them and went away.   
Shall He turn away from you like that, my Hearer? Shall He depart from you thus? What is your answer? Yes, or No? Before you go out of this House, I beseech you to answer me, and I pray God to help you say, Come in, my Lord, come in. May He grant it, for His names sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**JOHN 3:1-24.**

This is a very wonderful chapter because, while it teaches the doctrine of regeneration and the necessity of a great moral and spiritual change, it also reveals the doctrine of salvation by faith alonea very wonderful combination which puzzles many who read what is recorded here. Many have been staggered by one or other of these great Truths of God, yet they evidently agree, for they are taught by the same unerring Teacher and they are preserved to us by the Spirit of God in the same chapter!

Verses 1, 2. There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said to Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God be with him. Nicodemus was very candid. He went as far as he could go. If he had not yet learned to believe in Christ as his Savior, he did, at least admit that Christ, upon the evidence of His miracles, was a Teacher come from God. There is always hope of a man who is willing to see all that he can and who acknowledges what he can see. He will see greater things than these if he is willing to use his eyes.

3. Jesus answered and said to him, Verily, verily, I say to you, Except a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Without a new birth, he cannot see, he cannot comprehend, he cannot understand, he cannot know anything about the Kingdom of God.

4. Nicodemus said to Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mothers womb and be born? Ah, me! Our blessed Master taught much by parables and parabolic teaching is the best of teaching, but you see how readily it can be misunderstood how men can take the emblem in a carnal way and not understand its spiritual meaning. This is how the false doctrine of transubstantiation is taught. When Christ says of the bread, This is My body, the Romanists take His words literally, and so miss their spiritual meaning. It was in the same way that Nicodemus fell into error concerning Christs teaching.

5. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say to you, Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, He cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. If the water here signifies Baptismmark you, if it doesthen, observe, that there is no entering into the Kingdom without it. I do not think that Baptism is here intended at all, but the purifying influence of the Word of God symbolized by water. We might read the verse, Except a man is born of water, even of the Spirit, He cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. There is a great change of character necessary for entrance into the Kingdomseeing it is one thing, entering into it is another matter yet one cannot even see the Kingdom of God without being born again, or born from above.

6, 7. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said to you, You must be born again. Nicodemus was well born, no doubt. Probably he was a pure Jew. Yet he must be born again. And you may have descended from a long line of saintsyour parents may be in the Church of Christ and your parents parents, toobut still the Truth of God remains, that which is born of the flesh is flesh. At its very best, it cannot rise above that which gave it birth, it is but flesh. You must be born again. There is no hope for you apart from the new birth from above! You cannot see and you cannot enter the Kingdom of God merely by your first birth. Birthright-membership is a great delusion, for, that which is born of the flesh is flesh. And only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

8. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit. It is a mystery. You can never fully understand it, but you can enjoy it. If you are born again, you will know what it isbut you can no more discover your second birth than your first birth except by its results and effects. May God give you to know what it is to be born again! There are many doctors of divinity and men of great learning who know nothing about this new birth. And there are many who are mere babes in Christ who nevertheless enjoy the fruit of this blessed regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

9, 10. Nicodemus answered and said to Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said to him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things? These A B C Truths which are taught in the very first schoolbook used by Christs scholarsAre you a master of Israel, and know not these things?

11. Verily, verily, I say to you, We speak that We do know, and testify that We have seen and you receive not Our witness. This is true of all faithful ministers of the Gospel! We do not preach theories, we preach facts. We do not talk about speculations, we speak of a new birth through which we have, ourselves, passed. If there is no such thing, we are liars! But there is such a thing and this is our witnessWe speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen. The fashion, nowadays, is to make statements upon religious matters with great caution, expecting to have them disputed. But we need exercise no caution when we state what we know to be true! We will be positive, we will utter our, verily, verily, when we speak what is a matter of fact to our own consciencesWe speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and you receive not our witness.

12. If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things? Regeneration is a work that is worked here on earth and belongs to this present life. High as the mystery is, it lies but at the very threshold of the temple of Divine TruthIf I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things? No doubt unbelief hides much of heavenly Truth from us, but if we begin to doubt the very elementary doctrines of our holy faith, how shall the great Master take us on and up to the higher science that He is ready to teach us?

13. And no man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven. This saying must have puzzled Nicodemus! He had, doubtless, read a great many riddles, but into the meaning of this riddle he could not enter. Yet, Beloved, any child of God, though he was converted only yesterday, may know what Jesus meant! Now observe that, as the first part of this chapter sets forth the need of a great and supernatural change, the latter part of the chapter shows us the door of mercy wide open and tells us that faith in Christ will save us.

14, 15. And, 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. There is no contradiction here to what we have been reading. He that believes in Christ receives the new birth, receives eternal life and thus, by faith, gets that which is essential to a sight and entrance into the Kingdom of God.

16-18. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned. What a charming sentence! What comfort it ought to bring to the mind of every sinner who will now believe in Christ!

18. But he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believes not is condemned already. If you have heard of Christs salvation and you have not believed in Him, that is evidence enough of your condemnation! There is no need to prove your evil works. No need to fetch your diary and turn over the record of your life. If you have not believed in Jesus Christ, it shows a natural lack of holiness, a lack of love to the loving God and, by that evidence you are condemned, already, because you have not believed in the name of the Son of God.

19. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. The dislike of Christ is caused by a love of sin. If men did not hug their sins, they would embrace the Savior.

20, 21. For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are worked in God. If you do not like self-examination, you can be sure that you are wrong. If you do not like reading heart-searching books, or listening to a faithful Gospel ministry, you can be sure that you are wrong. If you do not like that part of the Word of God which judges you and makes you tremble, you can be sure that you are wrong! The man in business who cannot bear to look at his books, most probably has good reason to be afraid of his books. He shuts them up because they would shut him up if he were to pay attention to them! O Sirs, there is no more damning sign of humans condition than his endeavor to avoid the light! Search and see, look and examine! Make sure work for eternitywhatever you trifle with, trifle not with your souls! Take other things on hearsay, if you please, but not your condition towards God. Let that be searched into with all earnestness and sincerityand be not satisfied till the Truth of God has satisfied you.

22-24. After these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judea; and there He tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison. We ought to be thankful that Gods ministers are not silenced in this age. May the Lord raise up, in these evil days, many a John the Baptist who shall faithfully declare his testimony concerning the Lamb of God!

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FICKLE FOLLOWERS   
NO. 2273

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1892. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 27, 1890.

**And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head. And He said**

**unto another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go you and preach the Kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow You; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No   
man, having put his hand to the plow, and   
looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.   
Luke 9:57-62.**

SOMETIMES nobody appeared to come to Christ. He preached, but no followers appeared as the result of His preaching. At another time, we see that many came and desired to be numbered with His disciples, but they were not all of the right kind. Luke has collected here three instances which I think are typical of many more of those who seemed to be true followers of Jesus, who, nevertheless, did not continue with Him and were not really converts. I think that these three are put together, here, for the comfort of those of us who preach the Gospelthat when we are disappointed, we may perceive that we are not worse off than our Master was and that, when we think that we have brought men to conversion and find, after all, that they are not converted, we may not give up the work or be discouraged, but may say to ourselves, It was always so. It was so with the Prince of Preachers. May we not reasonably expect that it will be so with us, also?

Our Savior never refused anybody who came to Him and who ought to have been accepted by Him. His own words were, Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out. That is a true description of His dealing with men at all times. If they do but come sincerely and truly, He always welcomes them. On the other hand, He did not shovel them in indiscriminatelyHe did not gather them to Himself wholesale. He did not go about, as it were, soliciting their patronage, willing to take in anybody so long as he could swell the number of His followers. Oh, no! We have good evidence here that He knew how to shut the door as well as to open it. He knew as well how to warn the pretentious as to accept the penitent. He was ready for the sincere with open heart and open handsbut He was faithful to those who were self-deceived, or those who, through ignorance, professed what was not really true. Now, we ought to be the same, dear Friends. We should always be anxious to receive all who will come to Christ. At the same time, we must exercise judgment and not put down everybody as converted simply because he says that he is, but we must judge, watch, try and testlest we help self-deceptionand come to be the servants of Satan by bolstering up the delusions of mistaken men and women!

One thing I do not like about these three people of whom I am going to speak to you tonight, and that is, that in the case of no one of them does there appear to be any sense of sin. There is nothing said about repentance, or about their feeling their deep need of a Savior. They are like many we know. With no tears in their eyes, strangers to a broken heart, they become religious mainly of themselves, and they become irreligious of themselves. What they gained themselves they lost themselves. But, where there is really a deep plowing work done, when the seed comes up, it lives. Where the foundation is dug deep, when the house is built, it stands. When there is stripping, there is afterwards real clothing. When there is a probing of the wound, the healing is a true healing and not a pretense. I regret, therefore, that there should be so many persons outside of my text who have not any repentance. They seem to jump into their religion as men do into their morning bath, and then jump out again just as quickly, converted by the dozen, and unconverted, one by one, till the dozen has melted awaynot really convertedotherwise they would never be unconverted again!

I believe that we are going to have a great many converts. We are praying over them and praying for themand we need to know what sort of men and women they ought to be. We need to know how to deal wisely with them in the name of our loving, tender, but faithful Savior. We shall learn from His treatment of those who came to Him, how we should deal with those that come to us.

Now, first, there are some would-be followers of Christ who do not consider, as in the first case. Secondly, there are some would-be followers of Christ who do not put Christ first, as in the second case. And, thirdly, there are some would-be followers of Christ who still hanker after the worldand want to have Christ and the world, too. Neither of these three sets of followers will ever prove a comfort to us or a glory to God.

I. First, THERE ARE SOME WOULD-BE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST WHO DO NOT CONSIDER. The first man, and he was a scribe, too, said, Lord, I will follow You wherever You go. What that might meanwhat that might involvehe did not ask and, therefore, did not know. He was sincere as far as he knewbut then he did not know much. Had he known more, he would have said less.

Like our Lord, we meet with many persons who are great at resolving! I will. That I will. Solemnly, I declare that I will. They are willing to make that declaration as publicly as you likeand stand up, or fall downor do anything else to declare that they have resolved. I frequently hear persons exhorted to give their hearts to Christ, which is a very proper exhortation. But that is not the Gospel! Salvation comes from something that Christ gives you, not something that you give to Christ! The giving of your heart to Christ follows after the receiving from Christ of eternal life by faith. It is easy to work our friends up so that they say, We will give our hearts to Christ, but they may never do it, after all. If, with broken heart and contrite sigh, they had confessed their guilt and had penitently cried, God be merciful to me a sinner, they might not have looked quite so well, but there would have been more hope for them. We cannot come to Christ unless Christ comes to us and gives us a broken heart and a contrite spirit! If there is no repentance, depend upon it that that faith which we think we have is not the faith that will save us! Give me Faith with tears in her eyesI know her to be the true child of God. The faith that makes me feel my ruin, confess my sin and lay hold of eternal life because otherwise my merits will bring me to eternal deaththis is the faith which saves! But some people are very great at resolving rather than repenting and believing.

These people show, generally, very great confidence in themselves. This man said, Lord, I will follow You wherever You go. There is no prayer, Lord, help me to follow You, Hold You me up, and I shall be safe, Leave me not, or I shall wander from You. No, it is just thisI have made up my mind to this, and I am a strong-minded person, and able to carry out what I determine. Lord, I will follow You wherever You go. That is our duty, but that duty we shall never attain apart from Divine help. He that trusts in his own heart iswhat? A convert? No, a fool. And a fool is another name for a sinner. Go, write on water, and return tomorrow to read the phase you have inscribed! And when you have done that, trust your own determinations! Go and say that you will pluck the moon out of her orbit, or stop the sun in his blaze at mid-day! And when you have done these things, then can you so control yourself as to be always faithful to your Lord without His help. I would have you deal far more in confession than in resolving. Much more in believing than in bearing testimony to anything you have done, yourself, or hope to do, yourself, or resolve to do, yourself! This first man is very bighe talks great swelling words and he feels that he can do what he says and, in the simplicity of his ignorant heart, he saysLord, I will follow You wherever You go.

Do you not think that, perhaps, there was at the back of that declaration, some secret idea that he would be a gainer by it? May not this man have thought that Jesus Christ had come to set up a temporal kingdom and that, by following Him, he would get a high place in that new kingdom? If even Christs at His left, I cannot wonder if this half-disciple had some idea that he was going to be a great deal better off as to carnal things for being a follower of Christ!

Now, it may be that some here imagine that the Christian life is all pleasure and joy, that there will be no persecution to endure, no affliction to bear. It may be that you have imagined that the way to Heaven is by a grass path, rolled, every inch of it, and that when you say, Lord, I will follow You wherever You go, you mean that you will follow Him through Jerusalem when everybody waves the palm branches and casts his garment in the way. Do you know anything about Gethsemane and the bloody sweat? About Gabbatha, and the cry, Crucify Him!? And about Golgotha, that scene of deadly woe? Will you follow Him there when the many turn aside? Will you witness there that He, alone, has the Living Word? You think it shall be all kings weather with you if you go with Christ? Know you not that Christ leads us where the fiercest winds blow and where the stormy blast pitilessly hurls the sleet into our faces, and where we must perish if we live on earthly comforts? The people of God are a

tried peoplebut many fancy that it cannot be soand so they say, Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.

Now, notice that Christ undeceived this man in a very amazing way by telling him, Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head. He told that scribe that if he became His follower, he must share with Him, for the disciple is not above his Lord, nor the servant above his Master. What will you have to share if you follow Christ? You will have to follow a friendless Man without a home and often with no one to understand Him! If you take Him to be your Leader, you will have to travel over a rough road. Oh, may none of you ever profess Christianity for the sake of what you can get! I can assure you that, in these days, those who follow Christ for loaves and fishes will find the loaves very small and the fishes very full of bones!

The Savior meant this scribe to know, also, that, if he followed Him, not only would he gain no wealth by it, but he would get very little kindness as the result of it, for our Savior had no home of His own. There were kind friends, like those at Bethany, who often entertained Him, yet there were nights when the fox went to his lair, and the crow went to the woods, but the Savior had to tarry till His head was wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night, for no man gave Him shelter. Christ says to this scribe, You will be treated like that. You will lose many of your friends and those who are of your own household will become your enemies. Those who now admire you will abhor youand those who now call you a fine fellow and are pleased to entertain youwill shut the door in your face! That is what you have to expect. When this man heard that, his enthusiasm, I suppose, cooled down. He was like Mr. Pliable, when he tumbled into the Slough of Despond. He said the Celestial City might be a very fine place, but, if the way to it was so bad as that, anybody might have that city for himselfhe should not go plodding through miry ways in order to get to it! Many a man, when he has found that there is a Cross as well as a crown, has foregone the crown because he could not bear the Cross.

Does anyone here say, That was rather a hard method of our Lord, to tell this hopeful person that, and so discourage him? Ah, dear Friend, it was a very safe and proper method. Our Lord wants not to gather to His army those who cannot be soldiers. If we cannot endure what lies before us, it is honestly better for us to turn back than to pretend to go forward. If we enlist a man who is not sincere at the first, we are doing him a serious injury. We are doing ourselves an injurywe are doing the whole cause of Christ a solemn injury before the eyes of menfor all they that go back, like dogs to their vomit, bring disgrace upon the good cause. All those who say that they are Christs and then go and live ungodly lives, stain the name of Christ! They do more injury through having made a profession than they would have been capable of doing if they had never made that profession.

Now, as the Church hastily counts up her numbers and says, So many were converted, the world has another register and counts up the apostates, the backsliders, the wanderers! And it is a serious blow struck at the Crown and the Glory of Christ when the world can say, Such-andsuch a man bore Christs name, but he acted like a servant of the devil. Hence our Lord was wise, as the great heart-searching Savior, to let this man know the worst side of religion, so that, if he did take up with it, he might know what the cost of it would be. And so would I say to everyone herewe want you to come, we want you to join the army of Christ, we want you to be followers of the Redeemerbut not unless you will first count the cost! We beg you not to take the name of Christ upon you unless you are truly His in your very soul!

Do not dare to be added to the Church of God, unless heart, soul, and spirityour whole nature goes with your professionand you become truly and really a follower of Christ. The enthusiastic often comfort a preacher, but they as often delude him. Let him be on his guard and try well, with searching Truths of God and with the untiring preaching of the whole Gospel to those who come to him, lest the great heap on the threshing floor should suddenly prove to be nothing but chaff, when Gods great fan comes to blow upon it! We must keep the fan of the Gospel going, that the chaff may be divided from the wheat, for God would have us separate between the precious and the vileand then shall we be as His mouth.

II. Now, secondly, THERE ARE SOME WOULD-BE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST WHO DO NOT PUT CHRIST FIRST.   
The second case mentioned in this chapter is different from the first And He said unto another, Follow Me. This man was not a volunteer. The first man wasand he broke down in his preliminary examination. This man was, so to speak, a pressed man, impressed by the command of Christ, Follow Me, and he broke down, too. Every true volunteer into the army of Christ is a pressed man. The Grace of God has pressed him in, but everyone who is impressed into the army of Christ is also a volunteer, for he is made willing in the day of Gods power, so that, in the Kingdom of Christ, the pressed man and the volunteer are the same.   
Still, there is a difference in this case. This man had a distinct command from the LordFollow Me. That is a very solemn thing, to have a command from the Lord coming to the heartand then to repel it! I would have you very cautious when you hear the Word of God preached, or when you read it. If, at any time, it comes to you with unusual powerif it seems to arrest you, to lay an iron hand upon your shoulderif you feel it difficult to get away from it, I pray you, do not try to get away from it, for, if you do, you will add very greatly to your guilt. When Jesus, Himself, seems to say to you, Follow Me, be not deaf to the Divine message! Close not your ears to the heavenly command! Have not some of you sat in these seats, sometimes, and felt that if you could but get home, if you could but be spared to get to your little chamber to bow your knees in prayer, you would be very different from what you had ever been, for a voice which seemed more than human was calling to you, and you could not but hear it? I beseech you, never trifle with such a message as that! O my Hearers, never trifle with the Truth of God at all, but especially with a Truth of God that has a voice which you are compelled to hear, for, if you do, it will go hard with you. This man was called by Christ, who said to him, Follow Me.

The excuse which he made seemed very natural . He said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. To bury his father might be a duty of nature, but to put that firstSuffer me firstindicated where his heart was. He was willing to be a Christianthat is to say, a Christian and something elsebut the something else must be written in large capitals, and then, at the bottom, in very small type, and a Christian. Do you not know a great many people of that sort? Philosophical and Christian, but the Christian is quite the secondary consideration. They are like the man whose child was asked, Is your father a Christian? and who replied, He is a Christian, I think. But he has not worked much at it lately. There are many Christians of that sort nowadays. They work at their own business and they do a little, now and then, between whiles, in Christianity.

You are no Christian unless you put Christ first! He will not come into your heart to sit in the worst chair in the house! He will not come into your soul to be lodged in the attic! He must have the best room and the best seat in the roomHe must be firstand not even father and mother may come before the Lord Jesus Christ! A young man says, Yes, I must first become a journeyman or a master. I must first be married. I must see to the main chance. Oh, the world is your main chance, is it? Then you are no follower of Christ! If Christ is not first with you, Christ is nothing to you. You cannot have Him to play withyou must surrender your whole life to Him and make Him the first and last object of your lifes ambition, if you have Him at all.

But with regard to what this man said about burying his father, if there were some force in it to our ears, the Savior who knew everything saw that there was no force in it, for He said, There are other people to bury your father; but I have called upon you to come and follow Me now. Nobody else can do that for you, but the burial of your father can be done by others whom I have never called, and who know nothing about the Divine Life. Let the dead bury their dead. You would be surprised if I were to read you the letters which I receive about different things which the writers say I ought to do and could do. Of course I ought to take a side in politics and appear at the next political meeting. Of course, I shall not, because there are plenty of dead people to bury dead politicsand they may go and do it! My business is to preach the Gospel. Someone then says, You should take up social questions. There are plenty of dead people to handle social questionslet them handle them if they like the workmy business is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Then it is said, You ought to provide amusements for the people. Ought I? There are plenty of fools to do that without my going into competition with them! My business is to preach the Gospel. When a man is once called by Christ he may say of a great many things, Well, they are very proper. Very proper, indeed, for others to attend to. Dead people need burying and ought to be buried. It is a pity that there should be any difficulty about their being buried, but there are enough dead people to bury them. There are not enough living ones to preach the Gospelthere are not enough to follow Christ. Follow Me, said Christ, I must be first, and as for these other things, there are other people who can properly attend to them. It is more in their line. The dead know where the graves are. The dead know all about funerals. Follow Me, and let the dead bury their dead.

After all, if he had gone home to bury his father, it would have involved so much loss of time to him. As a follower of Christ, during that time he would not have been attending to his work. If he could have gone home to the funeral and preached Christ to the mourners, it would have been all in his days work. But as he would not have done so and did not think of doing so, he was only going simply to pay his debt of courtesy. He was losing so much time that ought to be given to his Master. And here was the worst result of this requestit produced unsound discipleship. Oh, what a mass we have of very questionable discipleship towards Christwhere somebody or something is put before Christ!

If you judge the mans life as it really is, you will find there is something that has a higher place in it than love to Christ. Judge him by his conversationis Christ first? There is a deeper emotion in his heart caused by politics, it may be, than by religion. I know some of our Brothers and SistersI have no doubt they are most respectable peoplebut if there is a meeting upon some political question, they are all excitement! They shout, Hurrah! They nearly rave and act as if they ought to have a strait waistcoat on! But go to the Prayer Meeting and you will find that there they are as dull as death! When there is anything to be done for Christ, you cannot stir themthey seem to have gone into a soporific condition.

May God save us from that state of heart and life! If Christ is not first, He ought to be, and if we do not make Him first, above all other things put together, we do not know Him at all. You are no Christian if you are not altogether a Christian. If every part of you is not consecrated to Christ, I fear that no part of you is consecrated to Him! At all events, this faulty discipleship will never produce much fruit, or bring much glory to God. With this second class of would-be disciples, our Master was troubled, and so are we.

III. Now, thirdly, THERE ARE SOME WOULD-BE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST WHO STILL HANKER AFTER THE WORLD. And another also said, Lord, I will follow You. He is another volunteerbut let me first. Something must be done first by him, too. There would have been no hurt in what he said if he had not put in that word first. Let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. Well, now, the objection to this was that he did not intend to come right straight out from the world. He did not mean to come out then and there for Christbut he must first go home and bid them farewell.

We know, first, that this was a very dangerous procedure, because the probability was that when he went home to bid them farewell, they would get to crying over him, so that it would take a month to say farewell. And then he would have to say farewell again and, perhaps, keep on saying it all the rest of his life! No man leaves sin little by little. No, there is nothing that will do as an escape from sin but total abstinence from itto have done with itand cut the connection altogether, by Gods Grace, and that without taking a farewell of it. O young man, when you are thinking of leaving the world, be afraid of those farewells! They have been the ruin of hundreds of hopeful people. They have been almost persuaded, but they have gone to their old companions just to give them the last kiss and the last shake of the handand we have not seen anything more of them! It is a dangerous operationthis trying to part with the world by degrees gently, in a courteous way, little by little. You will never do it! No man becomes a follower of Christ in that mode. No, like Paul on the way to Damascus, turn at once from being an enemy into a friend of Christ and cry directly, Who are You, Lord? and, What will You have me to do? Only this is true conversion.

Next, I do not know that this young man was wrong in his proposition to go home, but, he was going for the wrong purpose. You notice that his objective was to bid farewell to all his friends. Suppose he had said, Master, I will follow You, and to prove how I will follow You, I will go home and fetch my wife. I will go home and bring my children. I will go home and talk to my brother. I will go home and, in Your name and by Your power, I will bring my cousin to You? But, nohe says that he is going to bid them good-byeso he is not going with the heroic motive of winning them to Christ, like Matthew, when he called his old companions togetherand Christ sat at the table and preached the Gospel to them. That was a grand bidding good-bye to the world! But this young man is simply going to bid them all farewell. Beloved, if you go to your old companions, go and tell them what the Lord has done for you!

It was a manifestation of indecision . He would follow Christ, but, well, that home of his, all those dear faces at home. Our Lord would not have forbidden his seeing them again at another time, but now, first, he asks to go and see them first, as if they would not be there another week, or another month! He must go there first. So we find plenty of people who are thus undecided. They would like to go to Heaven by that broad road along which the multitude of men are going down to Hell. Yes, write my name in the Church rolls, but I shall keep it on the books of the club where I go and do a little bit of gambling, also. At any rate, just for a time. I must keep to my old companions for a while. I will be a Christian one of these days, but just now I have, well, the fact is, I have an engagementI promised, and I must keep my promise. Oh, there is no hope of men while they are like this, swinging between the two states! They must take the grand decisive step and say, Now I have cut the cable that bound me to the world. I have done with these dangerous shores. I have put out to the broad deep sea of consecration to God, never to come back to these rocks again.

This mans request showed a need of appreciation of Christ. Do you not think so? Why, if Jesus said to any one of us who are in our right minds, Follow Me, should we not think it our highest honor, our greatest delight to be His followers? Yes, let Him lead us over the ground where we see His blood-stained footprints and we will glory in following Him wherever He goes! Oh, when we start back, and must have a little more sin, and a little more of the pleasures of worldly company, and a little more going out with others where we ought not to go, it shows that the root of the matter is not in us and we are not really brought to the Lord!

And, finally, it showed great unfitness for the holy work, for the Master said, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God. When the plowman starts with his plow, he keeps his eyes right in front, looking straight ahead. If his heart is not in his work, every now and then, when he ought to be driving one way, he looks the other, and so he makes his plow boggle and get out of the rut. On he goes a little way and then looks back. He plows another bit and again looks back. He is a fine plowman! He will never win the gold medal in a plowing contest, I am sure! He is not fit to follow the plow at allhe is not up to his work. The plowman who is always looking here and there and everywhere, instead of looking straight ahead, is a most faulty plowman.

Now, we need for Christ, tonight, and every day and every night, men and women who will say, I am for Christ, for Him to live, for Him to labor, for Him to suffer, for Him, if need be, to die! Straight ahead, turning neither to the right hand for this, that I may gain, nor to the left hand for fear of what I may lose, but straight ahead, by that Divine Grace which has come into my soul and made me feel that Christ is all my salvation, and all my desirestraight ahead I plow towards the end of the field. God grant us to have many such converts! They only come by a simple faith in Christ, by having done with self, by having laid aside self-righteousness and sin, and coming straight away to Him who alone can make sinful men to be His true disciples.

If there is anything in this discourse that belongs to any of you, will you kindly take it home? If you do not like it, take it home all the more! And if you even get angry at the Truth of God that I have proclaimed and think that it is very personal, then hug it closely to you because it must be meant for you! That truth which pleases us is often stolen, but that Truth of God which grieves us is our own property! We had better keep it until it has grieved out of us the sin which makes us grieved at it! I do not ask you to put on any cap that does not fit you. But, if there is one that does fit, wear it, and go with it before the Throne of Grace and cry to God to set the wrong right.

May God bless these words of mine to the warning of many, for Jesus Christs sake! Amen.   
EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON **LUKE 9:37-62.**

Our Lord had been on the mountain and had been transfigured. When He came down, the first person that He met was the devil, with whom He had to come in contact. Whenever you or I get up on the mountaintop and have a very happy and delightful experience, we may expect to be in a battle before long. Our joy is, however, a preparation for the conflictit nerves our spirit and makes us strong to meet the great enemy of our souls.

Verses 37-40. And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met Him. And, behold, a man of the company cried out saying, Master, I beseech You, look upon my son: for he is my only child. And, lo, a spirit takes him, and he suddenly cries out; and it tears him that he foams again, and bruising him hardly departs from him. And I besought Your disciples to cast him out; and they could not. There they were, all baffled and defeatedand their enemies were looking at them with many a grin of contempt and scorn. Now comes the conquering Captain. He will turn the tide of battle when His troops are flying before the enemy! He comes and with a word He gathers them together again.

41. And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring your son here. If you have been praying for some dear one and the devil is not cast out, but the one for whom you have pleaded seems to be worse, rather than better notwithstanding all your prayers and all your effortshear the Master, Himself, saying to you, tonight, as He said to the father of this child, Bring your son here.

42. And as he was yet coming, the devil threw him down and convulsed him. This is Satans usual way. Whenever he is about to be cast out of anyone, he grows angry. And if he cannot destroy, he will worry, just as a bad tenant will do injury to the house if he cannot any longer keep possession of it. As he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and convulsed him. Perhaps I speak to some, tonight, who are coming to Christ and yet have worse fears than ever. They are more troubled than ever they were before. Well, you are like this poor childAs he was yet coming, the devil threw him down, and convulsed him. It was, however, the devils last throw.

42. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father. How well it is done! How perfectly it is done, how easily it is done, how quickly it is done when Christ comes on the scene! Let us pray distinctly, tonight, for those who have been our failures up to now. They will not be Christs failures if in prayer and by faith we bring them to Him.

43. And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they were amazed, many of them did not believe! It is one thing to be astonished. It is another thing to be humbled and to be led to simple faith in Christ. Never be content with any emotion but that which leads you to believe in Jesus for yourself.

43, 44. But while they wondered, everyone, at all things which Jesus did, He said unto His disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men. Just after the Transfiguration. Just after He had cast out the devil, He tells His disciples that the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men. The shadow of the Cross fell upon Christ long before the substance of the Cross was on His shoulder. He never forgot that the day would come when He must lay down His life as a ransom for many. And He never started back from it, either

*This was compassion like a God,   
That when the Savior knew   
The price of pardon was His blood,   
His pity neer withdrew.*

45. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask Him of that saying. They were not as yet spiritual enough to spy out His meaning. And when they had even a faint glimmering of it, it made them feel so sad, so cast down, that they did not dare to go and ask Him to explain it fully. Do you not think that you and I may have, tonight, something pressing upon us that would all vanish if we but took it to Jesus? And yet we fear to ask Him! Let us drive away that fear and be familiar with our Lord, and tell Him everything that vexes our spirit.

46. Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. Sad, sad, sad, a hundred times sad! When He was talking of His death and of His being delivered into the hands of wicked men, His disciples were disputing as to who should be the greatest! Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we may be guilty of quite as great an inconsistency! If, after Christs death for us on the Cross, and after He has given up everything for us, and has washed us in His hearts bloodif we begin to want to be great and famous in the eyes of men, what wretches we are! May God deliver us from all ambition, from every kind of self-seeking and from any measure of pride! Otherwise, we are inconsistent in pretending to follow such a Master as the Lord Jesus.

47, 48. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by Him, and said unto them, Whoever shall receive this child in My name receives Me: and whoever shall receive Me, receives Him that sent Me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great. The way to rise in the ranks of Christ is to go down. Be willing to do the meanest thing and you are growing in Christs esteem. When you are great, you are little. When you are nothing, then are you great. The Lord take away from us the black drops of pride that make us stand up on our dignity and think we must be somebody! Somebody? God will not use you as long as you are somebody! But when you are nobody, then will God greatly magnify you and use you in His Church.

49. And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Your name; and we forbad him, because he follows not with us. This man who was casting out demons was a Dissenterhe was not with the regular Church. He was doing good, but still, what right had he to do it? John said, He follows not with us. He was outside the pale! And even John, with all his loving disposition, felt that he must blow that candle out! He had no right to shine in anything but the regular, orthodox candlestick. We forbad him, because he follows not with us.

50. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us. Jesus also said that no man could do a miracle in His name and then lightly go and speak evil of Him, so that it was for the good of the cause to let the irregular practitioner go on with his business. Besides, if anybody can cast a devil out, by all means let him do it, for there is none too much of the power of casting out devils! And, remember, that these gentlemen who found fault could not cast the devil out themselves. They had been beaten in this very task and yet, when somebody else did it in the power of God, they began to complain and forbid them! That is surely being like the dog in the manger. God save us from falling into that spirit!

51. And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up. Is not that a wonderful expression? Christ is to die and to be buried. Ah, but this word comprehends everything, that He should be received up. Think not of the gloom of death, especially concerning your dear friends who have lately fallen asleep. Think of their being received up! They did seem to go downthey went as low as the grave but they could not go any lower! Thank God for His abounding mercy in receiving them up.

51. He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. To go where He must He scourged, spit upon and crucifiedHe steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.

52, 53. And sent messengers before His face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him. And they did not receive Him, because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem. He used to be welcomed in Samaria, but now the evil spirit has come to the front againThey did not receive Him, because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem, and they wished nobody to go up to the feast at Jerusalem, but desired all to stop and worship God with them on Mount Gerizim. So they would not receive Him.

54, 55. And when His disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, will you that we command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them, even as Elijah did? But He turned and rebuked them, and said, You know not what manner of spirit you are of. When you read the Old Testament, you will remember that the spirit of the Old Testament was in accordance with the Law of Moses. But you are not under the Law but under Grace, and the Spirit of Christ is another spirit, not the spirit of judgment, bringing down fire from Heaven, but the Spirit of mercy, bringing life and blessing from above!

56. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them. And they went to another village. That was all Christ did by way of punishment of these SamaritansHe went to another village. Yet, gentle as was this treatment, it was really a very severe punishmentsuch a punishment as will fall on all of you who reject Christ. If you will not receive Him, He will go to somebody else! If you will not hear Him, somebody else will. And if, when you hear Him, you will not accept Him, it may be that you will not hear Him many more timesthe Word of God may never again be spoken with any power to youChrist will go to somebody else.

57-62. And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head. And He said unto another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go you and preach the Kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow You; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.

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Sermon #403 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE BROKEN COLUMN   
NO. 403

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 4, 1861, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And another also said, Lord, I will follow You; but Luke 9:61.**

WHEN you have walked through a cemetery you have frequently seen over a grave a broken column intended to memorialize the death of someone who was taken away in the prime of manhoodbefore his life had reached its prime. I shall take that picture of the broken column to represent my text. It is a broken text. You expected me to go on and to conclude the sentenceI have broken it off abruptly. That broken column shall also represent the broken resolutions of many who were once in a hopeful state. As if prepared to witness a good profession, they said, Lord, I will follow You. But when there came a heavy blow from the withering hand of sin the column was broken short with a but.

So let my text stand. I will not finish it. But so let not your determination stand. The Lord grant by His effectual grace that while you mourn with sincere grief the grave of many a fair resolve which never attained the maturity of true discipleshipcut off with the fatal but of indecision you may now be quickened to newness of life. Thus you shall come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ. Thus, as a building fitly framed together and growing to completeness you shall be made meet for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

Lord, I will follow You; but... How remarkably does Scripture prove to us that the mental characteristics of mankind are the same now as in the Saviors day! We occasionally hear stories of old skeletons being dug up which are greater in stature than men of these times. Some credit the story, some do notfor there are many who maintain that the physical conformation of man is at this day just what it always was. Certainly, however, there can be no dispute whatever among observant men as to the identity of the inner nature of man.

The Gospel of Christ may well be an unchanging Gospel for it is a remedy which has to deal with an unfaltering disease. The very same objections which were made to Christ in the days of His flesh are made to His Gospel now. The same effects are produced under the ministry of Christs servants in these modern times as were produced by His own ministry. The promised hopes which make glad the preachers heart are still blasted and withered by the same blights and the same mildews which of old withered and blasted the prospects of the ministry during our Lords own personal sojourn in the world.   
Oh, what hundreds, no, what myriads of persons have we whose consciences are aroused, whose judgments are a little enlightened and yet they vacillatethey live and die unchanged. Like Reuben, unstable as water, they do not excel. They would follow Christ, but something lies in the waythey would join with Him in this generation but some difficulty suggests itselfthey would enter the kingdom of Heaven but there is a lion in the street. They lie in the bed of the sluggard instead of rising up with vigor and striving to enter in at the strait gate.

May the Holy Spirit in all the plenitude of His power be with us this morning so that while I shall deal with the character indicated by the text, He may deal with the conscience of those assembled. I can merely attempt what He can effectually perform. I can but speak the words. It is for Him to draw the bow, fit the arrow to the string and send it home between the joints of the harness. May some who have been in the state of those described by the text be brought today to solemn consideration and to a serious decision through the Holy Spirit of God.

Three things we would labor to do. First of all, let us endeavor to expose your excuses, Lord, I will follow You; but... Secondly, I will try to expose the ignorance which lies at the bottom of the objection which you offer. Then thirdly, in the most solemn manner would I endeavor to bring before your minds eye, O you who vacillate like Felix, your sin and your danger that your buts may now be put awaythat your profession may be made with unfaltering tonguethat you may henceforth, in very deed, follow Christ wherever He goes.

I. First, then, TO EXPOSE YOUR OBJECTIONS.   
I cannot tell, man by man, what may be the precise but that causes you to draw back. But perhaps, by giving a list, I may be directed to describe full many a case exactly and with precision. Some there are who say and seem very sincere in the utterance, Lord, I would be a Christian, I would believe in You and take up Your Cross and follow You, but my calling prevents it. Such is my state of life that piety would be to me an impossibility. I must live and I cannot live by godliness, therefore I am to be excused for the present from following Christ.   
My position is such in trade that I am compelled by its practices to do many things which would be utterly inconsistent with the life of Christ in my soul. I know that I have been called to be where I am but it is a position which renders my salvation hopeless. If I were anything but what I am, or anywhere but where I am, I might follow Christ, but under existing circumstances, it is far beyond my power. Let me answer that excuse of yours and show how stupid it is. Man, would you make God the author of sin? And yet if you are prepared to say that God has put you in the calling where you are and that that calling absolutely necessitates sindo you not perceive that you make the sin to be Gods and not yours?   
Are you prepared to be so blasphemous as that? Will you bring the tricks of your trade, your dishonesties and your sins and say, Great God, You have compelled me to do this? Oh, methinks you cannot have so hardened your brow until it has become like flint. Surely you have some conscience of rectitude left and if you have, your conscience will respond to me when I say you know you are speaking a lie! God has not put you where you are compelled to sinand if you have put yourself therewhat ought you to do but to leave that place at once? Surely the necessity to sin, if it arises from your own choice, does but render your sin the more exceeding sinful.   
But, you reply, I will confess, then, that I have put myself there by choice. Then I say again, if you have chosen so ill a trade that you cannot live by it honestlyin the fear of God and in obedience to His precepts you have made an ill and wicked choice. At all hazardsfor the salvation of your soul rests on itgive it up though it be the renouncing of every worldly prospect. Though wealth be all but in your graspunless you would grasp damnation and inherit everlasting wrathyou must renounce it and renounce it now.   
Scarcely, however, can I credit that such is the factfor in all callings except they are in themselves positively unlawfula man may serve God. Perhaps the most difficult post for a Christian to occupy is the army and yet have we not seenand do we not see at this daymen of high and exemplary piety, men of undoubted and pre-eminent godliness who are still in the ranks and are soldiers of Christ? With the example of Colonel Gardner in years gone byof Hedley Vicars and Havelock in these modern timesI will not, I dare not, take your excuse. Nor do I think your conscience would permit it.   
But if while the temptations are strong and your strength is small, you really think that there you cannot serve God, then resign your commission, give it up. It were better for you to enter into life poor and penniless and without fame or honor, than having glory and pomp and wealth, to enter into Hell. After all, to come nearer to the point, is it your occupation at all? Is it true? Is it not your sin that has made your but, and not your calling? Be honest with yourself, Sir, I pray you. You say that your calling throws temptations in your wayis it so? Do not other men avoid the temptations and because they hate sinbeing taught of God the Holy Spiritare they not able, even in the midst of temptation, to keep themselves unspotted from the world?  
It is, then, in your case not necessity, but willfulness that makes you continue impious and impenitent. Put the saddle on the right horse. Put it not where it should not be, take it home to yourself. There is no objection in the calling, unless, again I repeat it, it is an objectionable calling. The root and real cause of your hardness of heart against Christ is in yourself and yourself alone. You are willingly in love with sinit is not in your calling in Providence.   
Yes, but, says another, if it is not in our calling, yet in my case it is my peculiar position in Providence. It is all very well for the ministerwho has not to mingle with daily life but can come up into his pulpit and pray and preachto make little excuse for men. But I tell you, Sir, if you knew how I was situated, you would say that I am quite excusable in postponing the thoughts of God and of eternity. You do not know what it is to have an ungodly husband, or to live in a family where you cannot carry out your convictions without meeting with persecution so ferocious and so incessant that flesh and blood cannot endure it.   
Besides, says another, I am just now in such a peculiar crisis, it may be I have got into it by my sin, but I feel I cannot get out of it without sin. If I were once out of it and could start again and stand upon a new footing, then I might follow Christ. But at the present time there are such things in the house where I live, such circumstances in my business there are such peculiar trials in my familythat I think I am justified in saying, Go your way this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for you.   
Ah, but, my Friend, is this the truth? Let me put it to you in other words than you have stated it. You say if you follow Christ you will be persecuted. And does not the Word of God tell you the same? And is it not expressly said, He that takes not up his cross and follows not after Me cannot be My disciple? Did not the Apostle say, He that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution? What? Is nature to be changed for you? Must the Apostles and the martyrs endure and suffer great things and are the little trials that you have to bear to be valid excuses for you?   
No. By that host who waded through slaughter to a thronethe slaughter of themselvesno. By the men who wear the crowns which they have won on racks and stakes, I pray you, do not think that this shall be any excuse for you at Gods great day. Or if you think that it be an excuse that is valid for you now, rememberif you reject Christ you reject the crown. If you cannot bear the reproach of Christ, neither shall you have Christs riches. If you will not suffer with Him, neither shall you reign with Him. You say that your circumstances compel you to sin or else you would get into a world of trouble. And what do you mean by this but that you

prefer your own case to the Masters service?   
You have made this your God. Your own emoluments, your own aggrandizement, your own rest and luxury. You have set these up in preference to the command of the God that made you. O Sir, do but see the thing in its true light! You have put yourself where the Israelites put the golden calf and you have bowed down and you have said, These be your gods, O Israel! To these you have offered your peace offerings. Oh, be not deceived! If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. He that would save his life shall lose it, but he that will lose his life for Christs sake shall save it.   
Away, then, with these excuses about your circumstances! It is an idle one and will not endure the light of the Day of Judgment. Yes, says another, I would follow Christ. I have often felt inclinations to do so. And I have had some longings after better thingsbut the way of Christ is too rough for me. It demands that I should give up pleasures which I really love. I know if I should promise to give them up, I should go back to them very soon. I have tried, but they are too much for me. I did not think at one time that I was so thoroughly chained to them. But when I tried to break away I found the chains were not as I thought they wereof silk but of ironof triple steel.   
I cannot, Sir, I tell you plainly, I cannot. If to be saved requires me to give up my worldly amusements, I cannot do it. Well, Sir, I reply, you have spoken with the candor of an honest man. But will you please understand the bargain a little more clearly? Remember, soul, when you say, I cannot give up the world you have said, I cannot be saved. I cannot escape from Hell. I cannot be a partaker of the glories of Heaven. You have preferred the dance to the entertainment of glory. You have preferred the reveling merriments at midnight to the eternal splendors of the Throne of God.   
You have in cold bloodnow mark ityou have in cold blood determined to sell your soul for a few hours of giddiness, a little season of mirth. Look it in the face and God help you to understand what you have done. If Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, what have you done? Lift up your eyes to Heaven, behold the golden harps and listen to the harmony of the glorious song and then say, But I prefer your music, O earth, to Heaven. Look yonder to the golden streets and the joy and the bliss which await the true believerand then coolly write it down and sayI have chosen the casino, I have preferred the house of sin to Heaven.   
Look up and behold the draughts of joy that await believers and then go to the tavern and sit down in the tap room and say, I have preferred the enjoyments of intoxication to the mirth of eternity. Come, I say Sir, do look it in the facefor this is what you have done and ifafter weighing the two things in the scales together you find that the momentary enjoyments of the flesh are to be preferred to the eternal weight of glory which God has reserved for them that love Himthen choose them. But if it be nothing in comparison with eternityif the flesh be but dross in comparison with the Spiritif this world be emptiness when compared with the world to come, then reverse your foolish decision! May God the Holy Spirit make you wise.   
Oh, says another, but it is not exactly my pleasures. For I have found no pleasure in sin. It is some time since iniquity ministered pleasure to me. I have drunk the top of the cup. The froth I have already daintily sipped but now I have come to the dregsI know I am speaking to some men today, in this very stateI have jaded myself, says such-an-one in the race of pleasure. I have exhausted my powers of enjoyment and yet though the wine yields no lusciousness to my taste, I drinkfor I cannot help it. And though lust affords me no longer any exquisite delight, still impelled as by some secret force, I am driven to it.   
From old habit it has become a second nature with me and I cannotI have tried, I have tried awfully and solemnly, I cannotI cannot break it off. I am like a man whose boat is taken up by the rapids. I have pulled against the stream with both my arms till the veins start like whip-cords on my brow. And the blood runs from my nose in agony of vigor and yet I cannot reverse the stream. Nor can I set my boats head against it. I can see the precipice. I can hear the roaring of the dashing water as it leaps the cascade. I am speeding on swifter and swifter and swifter, till my very blood boils with the tremendous vehemence of my crimes. I am speeding onward to my merited damnation.   
Ah, Man! Yours is a solemn BUT, indeed! If I thought you meant it all, I would rather speak to you words of encouragement than of warning. For remember thiswhen you are ready to perish God is ready to save. And when your power is gone, then the plaintive cry, Lord, save, or I perish, wrung from a despairing heart shall reach the ears of the Most High and He that delights in mercy shall stretch out His arm to save. There is hope, there is hope for you yet. What? is the boats bow already out of the water and does she seem to leap like a live thing into the midst of the spray?   
O Eternal God, You can save him! You can come from above and take him out of the deep waters and pluck him out of the billows that are stronger than he. Yet say now, is this just as you have described it? I fear lest perhaps you make cannot only a substitute for will not. Do you not love those ways of the transgressor? Can you honestly say you loathe them? I do not believe you can. Remember the dreadful alternative when you say I cannot renounce these things and will not look to God to enable you to do it. You have said, I cannot escape from the flames of Hell. I cannot be rescued from the wrath to come. I am damned.   
You have, in fact, announced your own doom. That awful sentence you have pronounced upon yourself. You have sat in judgment on your own soulput on the black cap and read out your own sentence. You have put yourself upon the death wagon. You have adjusted the rope about your own neck and you are about to draw the bolt and be your own executioner. Oh, weigh your words and measure your actsand wake up to a consciousness of what you are about to do. Do not take the leap in the dark. Look down the chasm first and gaze a moment at the jagged rocks beneath which soon you must lie a mangled corpse. Now, before you drink the cup, know the poison that is in the bottom of it.   
Make sure of what you are doing and if you are determined that you will clasp your sins with the spasmodic and terrific grasp of a dying, drowning manthen grasp your sins and lose your soul. Then keep your sins and be damned! Hold fast to your iniquities and be dashed forever from the Presence of the Eternal One. If it is horrible to hearhow much more horrible to do? If it is dreadful to speakhow much more solemn to perform in cold blood that which our lips have spoken? But, says another, that is not my case. I can say I will follow Christ, but I am of such a volatile, changeable disposition that I do not think I ever shall fulfill my purpose. When I heard you preach a few Sabbaths ago, Sir, I went home to my chamber and I shut the door and I prayed.   
But, you know, some acquaintance called. He took me away and soon every good thought was gone. Often have I sat shivering in the pew while the Word of God has been quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged swordpiercing to the dividing asunder of my joints and marrow. It has been a discerner of the thoughts and intents of my heartbut the world comes in again. And even though I seem sometimes as if I were almost a saintthen again the next day I am almost a fiend. Sometimes I think I could do anything for Christ and the next day I do everything for the world. I promise, but I do not perform. I vow and break my vows.   
I am like the smoke from the chimneysoon blown away and my good resolutions are like a morning cloud. They are there but for the morning and soon they are gone. Well, certainly you have described a case which is too frequent. But will you allow me to put that also in a true and Scriptural light? Soul, do you know you have played with Heaven? You have made a game of eternity. You are like those men in the parable of whom it is said they made light of it. You have thought that the things of this world are more engrossing to you than the things of the world to come.   
You are perhaps less excusable then any otherfor you know right and do it not. You see your sin and yet you cling to it. You perceive your ruin and yet you go onwards towards it. You have had wooings of love. You have had warnings of mercy and yet you have shaken all these off. Oh remember that text, He that being often reproved hardens his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy. Because I have called, says God, 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.   
You may perhaps soon be given up to a seared conscience. The Word may be powerless upon you. You may become hardened and desperate. Ah, the devils in Hell are not in a more hopeless condition than you may be.   
I have thus gone through the most prominent excuses which men make for scattering from themselves those good thoughts which sometimes seek to get possession of their hearts. I will follow you Lord, but... I cannot, of course, point out the distinct persons in this large assembly who are in this condition. That there are such is certain. I pray God the Holy Spirit to find them out and make them judge themselves that they be not judged.  
II. I shall now come to the second part of my discourse. May the Lord be our helper. Soul, you who say, I will follow Christ, but I now come to EXPOSE YOUR IGNORANCE AND THE ILL STATE OF YOUR HEART. Soul, you have as yet no true idea of what sin is. God the Holy Spirit has never opened your eyes to see what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God or else there would be no buts. Picture a man who has lost his way, who has sunk into a slough. The waters and the mire are come up to his very throat. He is about to sink in it when some bright spirit comes, stepping over the treacherous bog and holds out his hand to him. That man, if he knows where he is, if he knows his uncomfortable and desperate state, will put out his hand at once.

You will not find him hesitating with but, and of, and perhaps. He feels that he is plunged into the ditch and wants out of it. And you apparently are still in the wilderness of your natural state. You have not yet discovered what a fool might seethough a wayfaring manthat sin is a tremendous evilthat your sin is all destructive and will yet swallow you up and utterly destroy your soul. I know that when God the Holy Spirit tells me to see the blackness of sin I do not need any very great pressing to be willing to be washed. My only question was, Would Christ wash me? Ask any poor penitent sinner that knows what the burden of sin is, whether he will have it taken off his shoulders and he will not say, I would have it taken off; but No, he will need but the very mention of the removal of his load. Lord, says he, do but take it away from medo but take it away and I am well content.   
AgainSoul, it seems plain to me that you have never yet been taught by the Holy Spirit what is your state of condemnation. You have never yet learned that the wrath of God abides on you. So long as you are out of Christ you are under a curse. If that word condemnation had once been rung in your ears, you would have no ifs and buts. When a mans house is on fire and he stands at the fire escape and his hair begins to be crisp with the hot tongues of fire that scorch his cheeks, he has no buts about itbut down the escape he goes at once. When Lot began to see the fiery shower coming down from Heaven he had no buts about making the best of his way out of the city and escaping to the mountains.   
And you. O may God the Holy Spirit show to you, Sinner, where you are today! Oh that He would make you know that your sentence is pronounced, that Gods messengers are out after you to take you to prison. Then you will leave off your buts. You will say, Lord, what would You have me to do? And be it what it may, your soul will make no hesitation about it. Surely, methinks you cannot have felt the danger you are in of daily destruction. If you have not felt that, I do not think the Spirit of God has ever come into your soul after a real and saving fashion. You have no proof that you are one of Christs unless you have felt the danger of your natural state.   
Do you see there?there is a scaffold raised. A man is brought out to executionthere is the block and here stands the headsman with his sharp gleaming axe, gleaming in the morning sun. The man has just laid his neck upon the block in the little hollow place shaped out for it. There he lies and the headsman has just lifted up the axe to cleave his head from his body As that man lies there, if a messenger should come from the king and say, Here is a pardon, will you accept it? Do you believe he would say, I will accept it, but...? No, springing up from what he thought would be his last resting place, he would say, I thank his majesty for his abundant grace and cheerfully do I rejoice in accepting it.   
You cannot have known where you are, or else but would be impossible to you. Such is your state, remember, whether you know it or not you put your neck upon the block of insensibility, but the axe of Justice is ready to smite you down to Hell. The Lord help you to see your state and put the buts away from you.   
It seems to me, too, that you are ignorant altogether of what the wrath of God must be in the world to come. Oh, could I take you to that place where hope has ever been a strangerif you could put your ear a moment to the gratings of those gloomy dungeons of which despair is the horrid warderif I could make you listen to the sighs, the useless regrets and the vain prayers of those who are cast awayyou would come back affrighted and alarmed. And I am sure your buts would have been driven out of you. You would say, Great God, if You will but save me from Your wrath, do what You will with me. I will make no conditions. I will offer You no objections.   
If I must cut off my right arm, or pluck out my right eye, be it so. If from this place of woe You will but save me. Oh, from this fire that never can be quenched. From this worm of endless fires which can never die, great God deliver me! If rough be the means and unpleasant to the flesh, yet grant me but this one requestsave me, O Godsave me from going down into the pit! If a soul were just sinking to Hell and God could send some bright angel to pluck it from the flames just as it entered there, can you imagine its being so mad as to say, I would be plucked as a brand from the burning, but? No, no. Glad to embrace the messenger of mercy, it would rejoice to fly from Hell to Heaven.   
AgainSinner it seems clear to me, inasmuch as you say, but, that you can have no idea of the glory of the Person of Christ. I see you sitting down in your miseryin the bare uncomfortable cottage of your natural estateyourself naked and filthy, with your hair matted over your eyes. Behold a bright chariot stops at your door, the sound of music is heard and the King Himself, stepping down from the chariot of His glory comes in. And He says, Sinner, poor, hopeless, weak, miserable sinner, look unto Me and be you saved. The chariot of My mercy awaits you. Come you with Me., My chariot is paved with love for such as you are. Come with Me and I will bear you to My splendors away from your degradation and your woe.   
You sit there and you will not look at Him, for if you did look, you must love Him. You could not behold His face, you could not see the mercy that is written there, the pity that trembles in His eye, the power that is in His arm. But you would say at once, Jesus, You have overcome my heart, Your gracious beauty is more than a match for me   
*Dissolved by Your goodness I fall to the ground, And weep to the praise of the mercy Ive found.* Shall I say more? Yet this once again I will admonish you. O you procrastinating, objecting Sinner! You have never known what Heaven is, or else you would never have a but. If you and I could peep but for an instant within the pearly gates. If we could listen to that seraphic song could behold the joy which flows and overflows the bosoms of the blessedcould you but spell Heavennot in letters but in feelings. Could you wear its crown a moment, or be girt about with its pure white garments, you would say, If I must go through Hell to reach Heaven, I would cheerfully do it. What are you, riches? You are bubbles. What are you, pomps? You are driveling emptinesses.   
What are you, pleasures? You are mocking, painted witcheries. What are you, pains? You are joys. What are you, sorrows? You are but bliss. What are you, tribulations? You are lighter than feathers when I compare you with this exceeding and eternal weight of glory! If we could have but a glimpse of Heavenbut a shadow of an idea of what is the eternal rest of Gods peoplewe should be prepared to endure all things, to give up all things, to bear all things, if we might but be partakers of the promised reward. Your buts betray your ignorance. Your ignorance of self, ignorance of sin, ignorance of condemnation, ignorance of the punishment, ignorance of the Saviors Person and ignorance of the Heaven to which He promises His people.   
III. Now, I have my last work to do and that would I do briefly. Oh, may Strength superior to mine come now and tug and strive and wrestle with your hearts! May the Spirit of God apply the words which I shall now use! Lord, I will follow You; but... Sinner, sinner, let me SHOW YOU YOUR SIN. When you said, But, you did contradict yourself. The meaning of that rightly read is this, Lord, I will not follow you. That but of yours puts the negative on all the profession that went before it. I wish, my Hearers, that this morning you would either be led by grace to say, I will believe, or else were permitted honestly to see the depravity and desperate hardness of your own hearts so as to say, I will not believe in Christ.   
It is because so many of you are neither this nor that but halting between two opinions, that you are the hardest characters to deal with. Sinners who reject Christ altogether willfully are like flints. When the hammer of the Word comes against them the flint gives forth the precious spark and flies to atoms. But you are like a mass of wax molded one day into one shape and molded the next day into another. I know a gentleman of considerable position in the world, who, after having been with me some little time, said, Now that you are going away I shall be just what I was before. For he had wept under the Word. He compared himself, he said, to a gutta-percha doll. He had got out of his old shape for a little whilebut he would go back to what he was before.   
And how many of you there are of this kind. You will not say, I will not have Christ, you will not say, I will not think of these things. You dare not say, I disbelieve the Bible, or, I think there is no God and no hereafter. But you say, No doubt it is true, Ill think of it by-and-by. You never will, Sinner, you never will. You will go on from day to day harping that till your last day shall comeand you will be found then where you are nowunless sovereign grace prevent it. I could have more hope for you if you would say at once, I love not God, I love not Christ, I fear Him not, I desire not His salvation, for then methinks you would get an idea of what you are and God the Spirit might bless it to you.   
Let me show you again your sin in another respect. How great has been your pride! When Christ bids you believe on Him, take up His Cross and follow Him, He tells you to do the best thing you can do and then you set up your judgment in contradiction to Him. You say, But. What? Is Christ to mend His Gospel because of your whims? What? Is the plan of salvation to be cut and shaped to suit you? Does not Christ know what is best for you better than you do yourself? Will you snatch from His hand the balance and the rod, rejudge His judgment and dictate to God, the Judge of all the earth?   
And yet this is exactly what you attempt to do. You set up your throne in rivalry to the Throne of Grace and insist upon it that there is more wisdom in being a sinner than in being a believerthat there is more happiness to be found apart from God than there is with Him. You make God a hard Master, if not indeed call Him a liar to His face. Oh, you know not what is the quintessence of iniquity which lies within those words so easily spoken, but which will be so hard to get rid of on a dying bedI will follow You; but

I close when I have just, in a moment or so only, described your danger. Soul, you are quieting yourself and saying, Ah, it will be well with me at the last. For I intend to be better by-and-bye. Soul, Soul, think how many have died while they have been speaking like that. There were put into the grave, during the past week, hundreds of persons, no doubt, who were utterly careless. But there were also scores who were not careless and who had often been impressed and yet they said But, but, but, and promised better things. But death came in and their better things came not.   
And then, remember how many have been damned while they have been saying But. They said they would repent, meanwhile they died. They said they would believe, meanwhile in Hell they lifted up their eyes being in torments. They meant what they said, but inasmuch as they did it not they came where their resolutions would be changed into remorse and their fancied hopes turned into real despair. On such a subject as this I could wish Baxter were the preacher and that I were the hearer. As I look around you, though there are full many who can read their title clear to mansions in the skies, yet along these pews what a considerable proportion there is of my Hearers who are only deceiving their own selves!   
Well, Sinners, I will make the road to Hell as hard for you as I can. If you will be lost, I will put up many a chain and many a bar and shut many a gate across your way. If you will listen to my voice, God helping me, you shall find it a hard waythat way of transgressors. You shall find it a hard thing to run counter to the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. But why will you die, O house of Israel, why will you die? Where is your reason fled? Have beasts become men and men become beasts? The ox knows his owner and the ass his masters crib, but you know not.   
What? Are you like the silly sheep that goes willingly to his slaughter? Are the swallows and cranes more wise than you? For they know the senses and they judge the timesbut you know not that your summer is almost overthat your leaves are falling in the autumn of your life and that your dreary winter of despair and of hopelessness is drawing near. Souls, are these things fancies? If so, sleep while I preach of them. Are they dreams? Do I bring out these doctrines but as bugbears to alarm you as if you were some children in a nursery?  
No. As God is true, are not these the most solemn realities that ever rested on the lip of man or moved the heart of hearer? Then why is it, why is it, why is it that you make light of these things still? Why is it that you will go your way today as you did before? Why will you say, Well, the preacher has warned me faithfully and I will think of it, but? I was invited and I will consider, but... I did hear the warning, but? Ah, Souls, while you shall be saying, But, there shall be another But go forth and that shall be, But cut him down, why cumbers he the ground?   
Wake, Vengeance, wake! The sinner sleeps. Pluck out your sword, O Justice! Let it not rest in its scabbard, come forth! No, no! Oh come not forth devouring sword! Oh, come not forth! O Justice, be still! O Vengeance, put away your sword and Mercy, reign still!   
Today if you will hear His voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation, but if you harden your hearts, remember He will swear in His wrath that you shall not enter into His rest. Oh, Spirit of God, turn the sinner, for without You he will not turn. Our voice shall miss its end and he will not come to Christ. Hear my cry, O God, for Jesus sake!

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1321 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

WHY MAY I REJOICE?   
NO. 1321

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 29, 1876, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven. Luke 10:20.**

You will remember that last Lords-Day we saw our Lord correcting a very natural grief and supplying its place by a more necessary sorrow, as He said to the women, Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. [See No. 1320Why Should I Weep?] Now, this morning we shall see Him correcting a very natural joy and directing its gladness into a more elevated channel. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven. If we commit ourselves to Him, He will guide us aright in all things and teach us to sanctify, alike, our grief and our gladness.

We shall commence our discourse by saying that our Lord did not blame or upbraid the 70 for rejoicing that the devils were subject to them. It would have been a very strange thing if they were not joyous on the occasion of so great a success. They had been sent forth upon their Lords errand. They had gone forward unhesitatingly in His name, girded with His strength. And His power had been revealed so that His name had been glorifiedshould they not rejoice? It was the Kingdom of God which they had proclaimedshould they not be joyful? It was their Lords enemy, as well as their own, who had fallen like lightning from Heavenshould they not exult? It was not likely, therefore, that the Lord Jesus was angry at their joy when they returned, saying, Lord, even the spirits are subject unto us through Your name.

We must read our Lords words according to the manner of Oriental speech. The peculiar idiom of our Saviors speech often makes Him appear to be actually forbidding what He only places in a secondary place. He did not mean, in the present instance, to censure their joy in their success, but only to make it subordinate to another rejoicing and to prevent its growing to excess. Some have thought that they detected in the 70 too much personal exultation, if not an almost childish triumph in the success which they had achieved. I must confess I see small traces of such a feeling in their report to their Master. Our Lord Himself evidently coincided with the truth of their report, for He, also, said, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven.

I can hardly think that He could have seen that sight without joy and, therefore, in some measure, He shared in the feelings of His servants. Had He observed in these Brothers that excess of childish exultation and vainglory which is supposed, I think He would hardly have gone on to invest

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such novices with yet more powerbut yet, He did so, for we read in the 19th verseBehold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Had they been intoxicated with a sort of childish glee, the wisdom of our Lord, as Commander in that Crusade, would have led Him to say to them, I had many things to have given unto you, but you cannot bear them now. I see already that you are intoxicated with your present victories and, therefore, I must withhold from you the extraordinary gifts of My kingdom till you are better prepared to receive them with humility and to use them with wisdom.

Such prudent conduct would have been in accordance with the usual proceedings of our wise Teacher. But He saw no such excessive exultation. Whatever He might fear as likely to occur, by-and-by, He saw nothing, as yet, to blame in them and so He went on to say, therefore I give you power over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. We cannot understand Him to be condemning their rejoicing over the fall of devils, for He says, Rejoice rather, and this almost implies that you may rejoice in the first subject of joy in some degree. Notwithstanding, He says, in this rejoice not; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven. The one is forbidden only in comparison with the other. We may rejoice that God blesses our labors, but still, it must be a far less prominent joy than that which springs out of our personal interest in the salvation of God! Church members may be glad when they see a great revival and their numbers largely increased. But, at such times it is doubly necessary to look to vital godliness and personal religion or the joy may be turned into mourning.

Now, my Brothers, taking the incident as it will apply to ourselves, there may be some of you, here present, to whom God has given many gifts for use in the kingdom of Heaven. He may also have given you influence in His Church and power among men of the world. And, moreover, your gifts and your power have not been used in vain, they have been made useful in many ways so that your course has been one of honor and success. The kingdom of God has come near to many through you and the great enemys kingdom has suffered injury by your means. Because of all this, you are greatly cheered. Is this wrong? Ought you not to be full of joy? I say yes, assuredly, you are bound to be glad! We should all be grateful for gifts, grateful for influence, grateful for successbut a gratitude which is not attended with joy can scarcely be called gratitude at all!

Would you have gratitude lament the possession of the blessing for which she is grateful? There must be joy in the thing received or else one can hardly be imagined to be thankful! If gratitude for these things is a duty, then surely a measure of joy concerning them must also be a duty! You may rejoice that to you is this Grace given, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And you may be glad that from you the Word of God has sounded forth throughout all the region in which you dwell. Thus far we go, but we must not exceed due bounds lest we become transgressorsthis joy must be held within its own lines and never suffered to run riot. Let us pause and see how our Lord Jesus puts a restraining, notwithstanding, and a repressing negative upon this joy when He judges that it is in danger of passing due bounds.

And let us also note how He supplies the place of this joy by something higher and better when He saysNotwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven. We shall dwell upon three things this morning. First, the joy which needs moderatingNotwithstanding in this rejoice not. Secondly, the joy which needs excitingRather rejoice. And then, thirdly, the joy of the Lord in sympathy with this last joy. Just read the first line of the 21st verseIn that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit. Our Lord could unite in this joy under certain aspects of it.

I. First, then, THE JOY WHICH NEEDS MODERATING. It is the joy of triumph over evil spirits, the joy of having preached the Gospel and worked wondersin a word, the joy of gifts, power and success. This needs moderating, first, because it is so apt to degenerate into pride. The 70 were not proud, for they said, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Your name. This was a very proper way of reporting results. They did not arrogate any measure of the success to themselves, but they ascribed it to the matchless, all-conquering name which they had used. So far, all was well.

But, my Brothers, the tendency of human nature is towards selfexaltation and so, by degrees, we come to emphasize the, to us, and we allow the, through Your name to be uttered softly, and yet more softly until it is only used as a matter of formand we, in our hearts, ascribe the whole success to ourselves. If God shall bless any man with longcontinued success in soul-winning, even though that is a higher achievement than the casting out of devils, there is an evil tendency in our corrupt nature which will tempt such a man to dream that in him there is some peculiar excellence or special virtue. He will say in his heart, Lord, even great sinners and proud infidels have been turned to You by my preaching, and he may, at the same time, forget that it was not his preaching, but the name of Jesus, which accomplished the notable deed.

We are nothing, however much God may have worked by us! All the glory is due unto the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, yet we are so base as to take credit to ourselves! Who among us can claim to have been perfectly free from this temptation? True, the Lord keeps His servants humble when He uses them, and if they abound in Grace they may safely abound in gifts, also. Saints may be safely trusted with abundant influence if they are abundantly under the influence of the Holy Spirit. But to be preserved when thus eminently honored is an exceedingly great favor! When we see a successful worker walking very humbly, we may say, This is the finger of God. Leave corrupt nature to itself and as a warm atmosphere soon causes dead flesh to become putrid, so will the ease and comfort of self-congratulation and prosperity speedily breed corruption in human nature! Therefore it is necessary that joy in gifts and success should be kept under due control and, if it is tolerated in a measure, as it may be, it must, nevertheless, not be indulged to any great extent lest evil consequences come to us. To here may it come, but no further, lest the

Lord behold us waxing exceedingly proud and put us aside from His work, altogether, and take unto Himself other instruments which will not attempt to rob Him of His Glory.

Again, this joy which needs to be moderated should be restrained by the reflection that it is no evidence of Grace in the heart that we possess gifts, or that we are successful. Talents are possessed even by wicked and slothful servants. Grace without talent will save, but talent without Grace will only increase our condemnation! Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. The highest conceivable gifts for Church work and the greatest influence in the Church are worthless apart from Divine Grace!

The possession of such powers may be accompanied by hypocrisy and falsehoodit was so in our Lords day. Judas worked miracles. Judas preached the Gospel. Judas was not only a member of the Church, but a trusted officer in it. Yet Judas went unto his own place, for he was a son of perdition. Our Lord tells us to expect many cases of graceless workers, for He says, Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity.

Observe that this warning speaks not of a few, but of many! We shall not only see a Judas once in 18 centuries, but many of whom this shall be the case. Men have gone forth making use of the name of Jesus and God has honored the name though He has not accepted the men who used it. They have preached and the message has been true, and God has acknowledged the Truthbut the men have not been true and, consequently, they have been abhorred of the Lord. Good seed will grow even though it was scattered by a leprous hand. Let us beware, however, of speaking the Truth of God with lying lips. Let us beware, lest we be like Balaam, who had his eyes opened to see marvelous visions of the future and his tongue inspired to utter deep things, and yet he fell among the accursed because he ran greedily after a reward.

Do not rejoice, then, dear Brothers, because God blesses you in what you are doing, so that you see souls saved and yourself honored, for this might happen to one for whom the Lord has no regard. But rather rejoice in being really and truly one of the Lords own people, written in Heaven. Let us keep under our body and watch unto prayer, lest haply, after having preached to others, we, ourselves, should become castaways. It will be a dreadful thing to keep the door of the Kings great banquet hall and open it to othersand yet to perish with hunger!

Moreover, it is very unsafe to rejoice unduly in the work which we have done because the work, after all, may not turn out to be all that it appears. I do not know how much of real good the 70 had worked. There can scarcely have been very many converts, for otherwise the number of the names would have been greater when the disciples assembled in the upper room at Pentecost. We will not, however, judge the work of the seventy. But we do know this, that it is very easy for us to go forth and, for a time, to succeed so that it seems as if even the devils were subject to us. And yet there may be no true Word of God. Crowds may gather to listen. There may be manifestations of deep emotion. The number of the conversions put down on paper may be very great and yet there may be little or nothing in the whole matter worthy of real joy.

So it may be in other forms of servicein the Sunday school or in any other place, we may think we have succeeded and yet we may have only been building a baseless structure on sand which the next tide will carry away. We ought to remember that every mans work must be tested before long, for the fire shall try every mans work of what sort it is. It is too early to begin to rejoice until the fire has passed over our lifework. The edifice is very lofty and apparently very fair, but what if those walls should turn out to be composed of straw, the foundations of stubble and the rafters of dry wood? How soon will they yield to the fire and how rapidly will the fabric disappear!

He who has built the tiniest cell of sparkling gems, or the smallest cottage of gold, has done more than he who has heaped aloft into the air a pyramid of hay! It is not the quantity of work done, it is not the space occupied in Church history, it is not the noise of our great worksthe question is, what is really and truly done? The quality is far more important than the quantity. The enduring character of the work is far more to be considered than the flash and the glare of it. Therefore rejoice not, O young man, in all the brilliant success which has, for the present, attended you. And rejoice not even you, old man, though you have had half a century of prosperity! Rejoice not so much in this as to exalt yourself because of it. But rather rejoice in something safer and more gracious rejoice that your name is written in Heaven, if so it is!

This joy, again, however good our work may be, is to be moderated because it does not prove that we are anymore gracious than others of far less gift and usefulness. Did you notice in the chapter which precedes my text, that nine of the Apostles attempted to cast out a devil from a lunatic child, but were unable to accomplish it, so that they said to the Master, Why could not we cast him out? The majority of the sacred conclave of Apostles failed to cast out a devil and yet 70 inferior persons all return with joy, and say, Lord, even the spirits are subject unto us. Do you draw the inference, therefore, that the 70 were superior to the Apostles? If you do, you have made a very grand mistake, for they were by no means so! And it would be a very great pity for any person who has been made useful in the kingdom of God to infer that he is, therefore, better than those whose earnest labors are crowned by no such apparent results.

An obscure child of God whose name has never been mentioned in the Church may yet be more worthy than we are! Of all estimates of ourselves, that which is founded upon our apparent usefulness is likely to be most deceptive! Be very careful, Sir, if you consider yourself to be something because you have worked wonders! I will show you the choicest of my Masters children on sick beds! I will show you the richest and rarest piety connected with illiterate poverty! I will show you a man who cannot speak

a sentence, grammatically, who lives in the very bosom of Christ! And you will blush for the depth and power of his vital godliness!

I will find you one who shines as a precious jewel in Jehovahs sight, compared with whom you are a poor dull pebbleand yet you are highly esteemedand he has little honor. His prayers have been of a thousand times more use to the Church than your preaching! Yes, it may be that your preaching has owed its success to his prayers! We cannot judge character by gifts! He who has one talent, and uses it well, shall have better acceptance at the last than he who has five talents and uses them ill. And he who fills his circle, though that circle is small, shall have far more comfort, therein, than he who, with a vast field, has, nevertheless, left the major part of it altogether unfilled. Great importance in the public mind is no argument of great Grace! A man is none the worthier for being successful! The best may not be the most prosperous. Boast not yourself, O fisherman, because your net is filled, for as good men as you are have toiled all night and taken nothing!

Again, this joy in success needs to be kept under tight rein because it is not an abiding joy. If you, O man, rejoice to-day because of subject devils, what will you do tomorrow when the devils break loose again? If you return from your labor full of success and rejoice, what will you do when, another time, you will have to plow the thankless rock and break the plowshare? What if your Master should send you where there will be no response to your invitations? What if He should send you among Samaritans who will not even hear you and you shall have to go from city to city and wipe off the dust of your feet against them? What if you should meet a child possessed of a devil and find that you cannot cast out the evil spirit because this kind goes not out except with prayer and fasting? Why, Man, you will be sorely depressed, then, and your courage will fail!

If you have fed your soul upon such light bread as apparent success, it will enfeeble you and what will you do when your prosperity wanes? You will not have steadfastness enough to go on under discouragement and you will shun your Lords service. This will be evil, indeed! O for a faith that is nourished on something better than appearancesa faith which does not live on gifts or influence, or present success, but sustains itself upon the unfailing promise of the ever blessed God. This is what we need!

Once again, this joy, if we were to be filled with it to overflowing, would be found unable to bear the strain of trial, trouble, temptation and especially of death. Take the lastwill any man, when he lies dying, be able to console himself with the reflection, I have testified of Christ to others? Will he not need some other confidence? Will he not require something far more personal? Will this be the sweet morsel that shall stay the hunger of his soul? What if he had power over devils? May not devils yet obtain power over him? Will he be able to cheer himself amidst deaths chilly waves with this boastI was a loud talker and a mighty professor, and the cause of Christ grew under my leadership? No, in such times as that we shall need surer consolations and more Divine stays than these. Unhappy will he be who has accustomed himself to live upon the excitement of crowded meetings, or upon the laudatory criticisms of friends. Gifts, attainments, labors, successes all heaped together cannot support a soul on the verge of eternity! There is ever present the fact that such things are no sure sign of regeneration. Did not the sons of the Pharisees cast out devils? Did not the people say of Simon Magus, This man is the great power of God? Yet these were graceless deceivers! We must have sure evidence of the new birth. We must know that our citizenship is in Heaven! We must know that we belong to Jesus! In one word, we must know that our names are written in Heaven or else we shall find ourselves utterly undone in our dying hours!

For all these reasons, then, be not too elated because of devils conquered, crowds gathered, or souls saved. But hearken to your Lords voice while He points you to other reasons for rejoicing.

II. So now we come, secondly, to consider THE JOY WHICH NEEDS EXCITING. Rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven. I am glad, my Brothers and Sisters, that this is the joy in which we indulge to the full, because it is one in which all the saints may unite and take their share. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, my dear Brother, though you can do but little for Him, you may rejoice that your name is written in Heaven! Here the bedridden Sister may rejoice! Here the incurably diseased may exult! The child of God, whose tongue is silenced by infirmity, and whose conflicts with devils are confined to his closet and his chamber, may come in and say, I, too, can rejoice that my name is written in Heaven.

Have you ever remarked how our aged friends always delight to sing *When I can read my title clear*

***To mansions in the skies,   
I bid farewell to every fear,   
And wipe my weeping eyes?***

They do so because experience has led them to dwell much on the joy of having their names written in Heaven! The joy which our Lord commends is one which springs from faith, while the other joy arises alone from sight. A man can see that he has gifts. He can see that he has power and influence. He can see that he has success. But rest assured that every joy which comes to Believers through the sight of the eyes is a doubtful joy! It is a dainty of which we must eat in scanty measure. Have you found such honey as this? Do not eat too much of it lest it sicken you.

But the joy caused by our names being written in Heaven comes of faith, for eye has not seen the record, neither has any angel read it to us and only because we believe in Jesus are we assured of itfor this reason the joy grows in good soil and is, in itself, safe. All the joys of faith are safe as the water which flowed from the smitten Rock. No poisonous streams can ever issue from that source! This joy is a heavenly manna of which a man may eat according to his eating and let his soul be satiated. This is healthy meat which breeds no plague in the camp as the eating of the quails did, for the quails were sent in wrath to satisfy their fierce desires.

We never hear of men dying of eating the manna which came down from Heaven, but they did die through eating the quailwhich was food for their lusts. Be it yours to get as much as ever you can of the joys of

faith and especially of thisRather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven. This joy consists in knowing our electionknowing, dearly Beloved, your election of Godknowing that your names were written in Heaven from before the foundation of the world! Oh, what an inconceivable delight is this! To be Gods choice is the choicest of delights! The joy of having your name written in Heaven includes the joy of knowing that you are precious to the Lord, for it is written, a book of remembrance was kept for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name, and they shall be Mine, said the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels.

To be written in Heaven means that we are precious in the sight of the Lord, that He has noted us down in the list of His crown jewels and will preserve us for Himself till the day in which all His sacred regalia shall be complete. Blessed are those who stand recorded in the inventory of Heavens jewel house! To be written in Heaven means that you claim the right of citizenship in the New Jerusalem, the Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in Heaven. Just as there is a roll kept by great cities in which they inscribe the names of citizens, so do we rejoice that our names are written in the roll of the City above, and that, from now on, our citizenship is in Heaven, from where we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus!

This is a broad subject for rejoicing, for it includes priceless privileges and honors more than royal. We also rejoice that our names are written, that is, known and published in Heaven. Paul mentioned certain of his fellow servants of whom he said, whose names are written in Heaven. As much as to say though they have neither fame nor honor here, they have a perpetual record where honor is worth receiving, namely, before the Throne of God! The heavenly writing signifies that we are part and parcel of Christs new kingdom! We are inscribed among His soldiers, we are commissioned to bear hardness for His sake. We are written in Heaven among the friends of Jesus, we are accounted as of the sacred brotherhood! In the great book of the Divine Fatherhood, we are numbered among the children and, from now on, we shall be regarded and treated as belonging to the one family in Heaven and in earth. This is the matter concerning which we are called to rejoice. Rejoice that your names are written in Heaven.

I see in this fact abundant cause for joy , but I cannot stay, this morning, to bring it out in detail. I would have you joy in the great Grace which first inscribed your name in Gods eternal book. Oh, bless the sovereign, distinguishing, discriminating Grace which wrote down your unworthy name where there might have stood the name of a king, or of an emperor, or the name of a person of great repute, of superior talent, or of great eloquence and learning! Instead of those which men esteem to be great names, there stands your common name! Therefore give the Grace of God all the glory evermore! And then rejoice in the Grace which has kept your name inscribed in that heavenly roll, so that over you that ancient threat of the Law has had no powerWhoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of my Book. (Exo. 32:33).

But up to now you have stood among those of whom the Spirit speaks expressly in the Book of the RevelationHe that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. There stands your name, still recorded in the Lambs Book of Life, though many a tear of yours might well fall upon it to think what Grace it is which keeps it there and will keep it there forever! A name among Gods sons and daughters is better for you than if your name were in Debretts Peerage, or in the Royal Almanac de Gotha. Being in the Book of Life guarantees you peace, joy, security, blessedness nowand secures you a place hereafter among the blood-washed host in the many mansions, which Christ has gone to prepare for those whom His Father has given Him!

Sit down now, Beloved, and let your soul triumph to the last degree of joy in thisyour names are written in Heaven! Forget the falling devils for awhile, forget your abilities, forget your successes. Cast these all at your Redeemers feet, where they ought to be, and then take this to yourself as your joy, your portion, your Heaven belowthat your name is written in the family register of the Eternal! May the Holy Spirit inspire you with this sublime delight. Brothers and Sisters, this is a joy which can be cultivated. How are we to cultivate it? If we desire to have much of this joy, we must make the fact sure. We must be certain that our names are written in Heaven, or else we cannot rejoice in it. Let your faith grow until it reaches the full assurance of faith and then shall you rejoice that your names are written in Heaven!

How am I to know it? one asks. Well, Friend, one thing is sure, if God has written you down among those who are saved, you can soon know it because you are saved! If you are forgiven, your name is written among the forgiven. If you are, indeed, quickened and made alive, your name is written among the living in Zion. I will not invite you to go further and peer into that which is unrevealed, for if I did so I should be as much out of my sphere as those are who pretend to bring men messages from the spirit world! The Lord gives not to any soul, dead in sin, the least right to believe that it is written among the living. Neither gives He to any ungodly man the liberty to hope that he is written among the elect of God.

We must have evidence, not dreams and airy suppositions! And the evidence of our name being written in Heaven is that we have been called by Grace out of the world to follow Jesus. We see our election by our calling, and nothing else. We may know what is written about us in Heaven by that which is written within us on earth. If Grace has written upon your heart till you are an Epistle of Christ, known and read of all men, your name is in His secret book! If you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are His, and the Lord knows them that are His. He has written them down in His own private tablets which He carries in His bosom. If your name is among true Believers on earth, it is among the redeemed in Heavenyou need not question that, for the declarations of Scripture put it beyond a doubt.

If you would rejoice in your names being written in Heaven, not only be assured of the fact, but meditate much upon it. Let this be frequently on your mind, My name is written in Heaven. Beneath the name of my Lord, the Lamb, it is inscribed. I am one of His redeemed and He writes me down among His dearly purchased property. He knows me, looks upon me and regards me as His treasure. I am not my own, I am bought with a price, I belong to Him. Go, Brothers and Sisters, and exult in this and let the sweet influence of it be daily seen upon your lifefor this joy, dear Friends, will make all else on earth pale, in comparison, with the fact your names are written in Heaven!

What if you are rich? Rejoice not in this, for riches take to themselves wings and fly away, but rather rejoice because your name is written in Heaven! If you are a man of learning, thank God for your knowledge and use it for His Glory, but, nevertheless, rejoice not in this, for what is earthly knowledge often but learned ignorance? Rather rejoice because your name is written in Heaven. If you are a person of position in the Church, thank God if you may glorify Him thereby! But rather rejoice because your name is written in Heaven. Are you strong and in good health? Be grateful for the privilege, but rather rejoice because your name is written in Heaven!

Turn this Inspired text round another way and if you have any sorrow, or if you mourn the absence of any earthly good, do not lament too bitterlybut rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven! You are poor. Well, be not despondent, for your name is written in Heaven! You are despised and your name is cast out as evilbut rejoice, none the less, for it is written in Heaven! You have but few gifts and abilities, but your name is written in Heaven! You could not stand up and edify a multitude, but your name is written in Heaven! When you die your departure will make but a small gap in the Churchs ranks, but your name is written in Heaven! Whatever you lack or whatever you suffer, let this console you and, at the same time, let it strengthen you for service.

The joy of the Lord is your strength, you will feel able to go forward in Gods work when you can boldly say, My name is written in Heaven. I may well serve Him who has so graciously redeemed me! He has put me down among His people, why should I not, therefore, expect Him to be with me when I go upon His errands and attempt to win Him honor? My name is written in Heaven and, therefore, I will live for Him to the utmost of my strength and spend and be spent for His name. There seems to me to be such a wonderful moral and spiritual power about this joy in having ones name written in Heaven that it does not require me to explain why the Savior encourages you to indulge in it!

It is a corrective to the other joy, but it has about it, also, independently of that, so many admirable uses that we need not add a word by way of guarding it, or restraining it, but may, on the contrary, earnestly invite you to partake of it without stint! Eat the fat and drink the sweet! Rejoice, yes, rejoice abundantly! Rejoice and yet again rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven!

III. Now, lastly, into this joy the Savior enters and we have to look in the third place to THE JOY OF THE LORD IN SYMPATHY with it. And so we add to our text the first sentence of the 21st verseIn that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit. Why did He rejoice? I think it was with a very same joy that He bids us cultivate as far as it related to Himself, for you see, He rejoiced because Grace was given. He said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. It makes Christs heart glad to think that God has been gracious to the sons of mento think that He has plucked some of the race out of the horrible pit and lifted them up from the miry clayand brought them out of darkness into His marvelous light.

It makes His soul glad to see that sin has been overcome in many men and that many have been renewed in the spirit of their minds by Divine Grace. Jesus was also glad at the Fathers choice. He said, I thank You, O Father. He looks at these 70 babes out of whose mouth He has ordained strength, and He says, I thank you, O Father, for having chosen these. They looked a wretched regiment to conquer the world with, did they not? A company of fishermen and peasants, men of the lower order! If a man had to shake the world, he might naturally wish for choice spirits, the elite, the aristocracy of thought, at any rate, if not the aristocracy of gold and silver! He might wish to select the refined, the noble, the educated, for his great enterprise.

But Jesus Christ is perfectly satisfied with His Fathers choice. It has given me intense joy, sometimes, to think that our dear Savior is perfectly satisfied to think that His Father should have chosen me. He is not like Hiram, who, when King Solomon gave him certain cities, was discontented with them. But our Lord has never spoken a word against any of the sheep His Father gave Him, nor has He despised any of the elect ones whom the Father has put into His hands. He is perfectly content with you, Beloved, perfectly satisfied that you should be chosen, though you are not one of the wise and prudent, that you should be chosen, though you are like one of the base things of this world. Jesus rejoiced and thanked the Father because of the choice which His Sovereign Grace made.

Notice the spirit in which Jesus puts His thanksgivingHe is satisfied with the choice because it is Gods choice. Even so, Father, He said, for so it seemed good in Your sight. That is the true spirit of Christ, to be content with what God wills because God wills itHe has no questions, no judging, but shows an entire submission, no, an intense delight, in the august will of God! Let us, also, delight ourselves, this morning, in the fact that our names are written in Heaven because God willed them to be there! How well satisfied we ought to be with that will, but how much more joyous may we be because Christ, also, is content with that will, by which we are given to Him that we may be His people.

Then our Savior went on to rejoice because the Grace of God given to us has revealed to us Christ, and revealed to us the Father, for He says, no man knows who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him. Now, the Grace of God has manifested itself to you and to me, Beloved in Christ, by revealing the

Father, whom we now inwardly and truly know. We can say in our very souls, Our Father which are in Heaven. And we also know the Son. We cannot tell others all we know of Him, all the secret fellowships we have had and into what deep communion we have entered, but we know Christ and are known of Himand this is our lifes work to go on to know Him yet more and moreand to know the Father in Him.

Jesus exulted because there was a fellowship about all this, for He speaks of His knowing the Father and the Father knowing Himand then of our knowing the Father because the Son has revealed Him to usall of which implies a wondrous communication and communion with the Father and with the Son. Now, this, I take it, is the cream of joy, a joy in which Christ partakes as He has fellowship with the Father and with us, and of which we partake as we have fellowship with Him and with the Father. Now, mark, there is nothing of this in, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us. There is nothing of this when we merely have success in soul-winning. A man may work marvels and yet have no fellowship with the Father and with the Son and, therefore, he may lack that which is the essence, the center point, the focus of all true joy!

But he who has his name written in Heaven has had the Father revealed to him through the Son and in this he may exceedingly rejoice, for the very news of this is what kings and Prophets waited for and found not. This is that which even angels desire to look into! Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say rejoice! My last word is for those who know nothing about their names being written in Heaven. I would like to turn the text upon you for a second or so, for it has a dark side to you, and I pray God that as you see it, you may tremble and fly to Christ!

Whatever you have in this world, Sinner, you have nothing worth rejoicing in because you cannot say your name is written in Heaven! Rejoice neither in your wealth, your health, your children, your prosperity, your position, your successfor if your name is not written in Heaven, Ichabod is written over all your choicest possessions! As you look on all that you have gained, remember that God can make your souls to hunger and faint even in the midst of all these things! Listen to the thunder of that dreadful sentence, I will curse your blessings. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but He blesses the habitation of the righteous.

Oh that your names may be written in Heaven for His mercys sake. Amen.   
**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONLuke 9:51-62; 10:1-24.** HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK219, 239, 719. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #2319 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE LORDS CHOSEN MINISTERS   
NO. 2319

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, JULY 30, 1893. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, JUNE 23, 1889.

**In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that 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. Luke 10:21.**

THE habitual state of mind of Jesus was, I think, a deep calm. Beyond all ordinary men, He possessed His soul in peace. We find Him sleeping in the midst of a storm, the very best thing that He could do. He knew that, rocked in the cradle of the deep by His great Father, He was supremely safe, so, finding a pillow, and going near the stern of the ship, He fell asleep.

But there were times when His spirit ebbed out. He was always a Man of Sorrowsthe surface of His soul was often disturbed with storms of griefand then we read that Jesus wept. Sometimes, however, the tide was at the flood, and so we here, read, In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit. It is very seldom that we read this. So seldom did He show His joy that it was recorded at once by the Evangelist. Luke took care to note that, even as others had mentioned His tears. Jesus was a man of constant grief, a mourner all his days, and yet at times the deep calm of His spirit was stirred by something other than the north wind. The south wind blew and all was joyous and bright with HimIn that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit. I thought that this would be a profitable theme for meditation for a short time, tonight, in contrast to that of this morning. [Sermon #2091, Volume 35Jesus WeptRead/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] I do not intend to go so deeply into this subject as I did into that, but I think that there are some matters here which may be instructive to us.

I. First, let us ask, WHAT WAS THE OCCASION OF OUR MASTERS JOY? In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit. You may judge a man by his joyas a man rejoicesso is he. What made Christ rejoice? If I were to put the question to all of you who are happy, tonight, What makes you rejoice? some might, perhaps, be ashamed to answer my enquiry, but there was no reason why Jesus should blush at that which made Him glad.

First, I notice that He rejoiced in stirring times. He had sent out the 70 disciples. They had gone, in 35 pairs, all over the country, telling that He was coming and He was reckoning upon going to every city and place to which He had sent His heralds. Seeing what was done and what was going to be done, the Saviors heart rejoiced. Some people like lazinessChrist loved activity. This morning I showed you that there was no indolence in Him, for He wept, and that old word, indolence, means not grieving, does it not? But He did grieve, so there was no indolence in Him in the old and literal classic sense and, certainly, no indolence in Him in the sense in which we now use the word. He could weep and, therefore, He could work. He could feel and, therefore, He could bestir Himself. And in stirring times He felt Himself glad. How some of us long to see the Church of God fully astir! We seem to have a dreadful calm, nowadays, like that of the Ancient Mariner when

*The very deep did rot.*

*Alas, that ever this should be!*   
We need the wind from Heaven to stir our sails and set the ship in motion. We need the breath of the Holy Spirit to speed us to our desired haven. It was not thus with Christ, for He rejoiced in times of activity!

He rejoiced, next, when He was surrounded by faithful preachers. There were 70 of His disciplesquite a little Conference! He felt Himself in good company with the seventyall faithful preachers of the Wordgathered around Him. You say that it was not many. No, but it was a good beginning! It was a noble beginning that, out of a few disciples (and He had not many, at most), He should be able to pick out 70 who were fit to be sent out to preach! They must have been a fine class of men, though they were simple-minded fishermen and peasants. And to find 70 of them who could be sent to preach and declare that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, who were fit to be trusted with miraculous power, might well make Him glad! Brothers, when we see plenty of preachers of the Gospel, when we see the Lord calling one and another to go forth and proclaim His Word of Grace, then do we, also, rejoice in spirit!

Jesus also rejoiced because all these 70 had found a welcome. It seemed rather an experiment to send out 70 unlettered men to proclaim the Kingdom of God. It was like sending lambs into the midst of wolves! Would not some of them be stoned to death? When the muster-roll was read, would not one or two, at least, be missing? But no, the seventy returned again with joy. They had all been welcomed! Everybody seems to have received them and entertained themand they came back in high spirits! And the Savior, seeing them return thus, not as preachers without congregations, but itinerant ministers who had been listened to, everywhere, with respectful attention, our Master felt, I say, that He, also, must rejoice, so, Jesus rejoiced in spirit.

It is of no use having ministers if they have nobody to preach to and it is very likely that, before long, we shall have more ministers than hearers if things go on as they now go! We have so many of our brothers with marvelous gifts of dispersion that we have seen magnificent congregations that used to gather around earnest Evangelical preachers, scattered to the winds! There is nothing in that to rejoice over, except for Satan to rejoice! But when you see a people made willing, in the day of Gods Power, to listen to the heralds of the Cross, then you may, indeed, rejoice!

Jesus rejoiced, further, because He heard that the Power of God had rested on them all. The 70 had healed the sick and, to their own astonishment, they had cast out devilsand they mentioned it with great exultation! And He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we need not rejoice because there are many professed preachers! And it might not be a sure ground of rejoicing if they all had congregations. But it is a safe reason for joy when the Power of God rests upon them! Only give a man that old Power of God with him and I am not afraid but what he will have a congregation, and I am certain that grand results will come of his work! If God is with us, His Word which we preach cannot fail! It will not only reach the ear, but it will pierce the heart! It will awaken the spiritually dead! It will turn hearts of stone to flesh! There is still a Divine Power going with the preaching of the Word of God. The Gospel is still the Power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes! And when we see that that is the case, and that men and women are being converted, then I am sure that, like our Master, we shall do well to rejoice in spirit!

Further than this, our Savior rejoiced in spirit because He saw that Satans kingdom was being shaken. To fetch Satan down from his throne, is no small thinghow is it to be done? Well, the philosophers may try their magnetism, but the devil is to strong for them. The orators and rhetoricians may try their rounded periods and decorate their orations with quotations from the poets, but the devil never stirs for them. But preach Jesus Christsay that His Kingdom is at hand, proclaim that He is come to save the lost and that whoever believes in Him shall live eternallyin a word, preach up Christ, and you soon preach down the devil! He does not come down by slow degrees. He falls, like lightning, from Heaven! You have seen lightningyou may have seen it in that great storm a fortnight agoit took no time at all to come down from Heaven! Just a flash and it was here! So, where the Gospel is preached with Divine Power, Satan comes down from his throne in human hearts and human minds as rapidly as the lightning flash falls from Heaven! And when we see his kingdom shaken, then, like Jesus, we rejoice in spirit.

Still, I do not think that I have hit the center of the target yet. The Lord Jesus deeply rejoiced in spirit because of the men by whom this work had been done. What sort of men were they? Upon this I shall have to dwell a little further on. But there was this about themthey were glad to have been put into the Kings commission. The seventy returned again with joy. They had never been so happy beforethis doing of the Lords will had been a great delight to them! You could see it by the very spring of their feet and the flash of their eyes. They came back to their Master, delighted, and Jesus caught the contagion of their joy and He rejoiced in spirit! People who serve Christ, willingly, who feel a delight in doing His will, are sure to bring delight to Christs heart. Are you, dear Friends, in your holy work, doing it with joy, or do you serve the Lord because you cannot help it, like slaves driven to their toil by the overseers lash? Jesus cannot rejoice over you if that is the case. But if you can say, I delight to do Your will, then you will make His heart rejoice!

He rejoiced in these men because, when they came back, having done wonders, they ascribed it all to Him. They said, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Your name. They did not begin to pilfer the Glory and take the honor to themselves. Christ is glad to have a people who lay all the honor where it ought to be laid, and put the crown on the right head. I believe that there is nothing that angers Christ more, in His ministers, than to hear them talk about what they have done, without duly ascribing all the Glory to Himself. When they do ascribe it to Him, then Jesus rejoices in spirit.

But He rejoiced most of all that, of all these seventy, He could say that their names were written in Heaven. It is an easy thing to become a preacher, or a teacher, an evangelist, or what notbut are our names written in Heaven? As Christ would have us rejoice most over that, no doubt He rejoices most over it when He sees that we not only have our names written down in the Clergy List, or our denominational Handbook, but that our names are really written among the living in Zionthose who are quickened by His Grace, washed in His blood and truly made to live by His Spirit! In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit. I have shown you the occasion of His joy. When you have similar occasions, dear Brothers, dear Sisters, mind that you rejoice in spirit, too!

II. But now, secondly, WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF CHRISTS JOY? Jesus rejoiced in spirit.   
The answer to this question is, first, that it was spiritual joy. There is a good deal of joy in the world, even among religious people, that could not be called spiritual. I am not certain whether all the expressions of joy one hears at some excited meetings are worthy to be put on the same heap with this joy of Christ. There is mental joy. There is a sort of physical joy, when one gets excited and stirred upthis is but bronze or silverbut spiritual joy is the gold of joy and the gold of that land is good! If, down deep in his inner life, ones spirit can rejoice in God, he is the man who is like his Master when He rejoiced in spirit!   
You who have the Revised Version, which often teaches us much, will, I dare say, be surprised to read in the margin the following rendering, In that same hour He rejoiced by the Holy Spirit. That is a very remarkable rendering, and I think a correct one. That is the kind of joy that Jesus had, joy worked in Him by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was poured upon Him without measure and, as part of the fruit of the Spirit is joy, the Spirit gave Him much joy, as well as much love. Beloved, pray God to give you joy by the Holy Spirit! All the other joy in the world, if heaped up together, would be only so much smoke and vapor! But joy in the Holy Spirit is solid bliss and lasting pleasure. Here you have the great ingots of joy. How ponderous they are, how precious they are, how immeasurably valuable, how infinitely beneficial! Joy by the Holy Spiritoften very calm and quiet, for, He leads me beside the still watersbut a very wonderful joy. The joy of God, like the peace of God, which passes understanding this is a joy which passes all measure or bound. That was the joy of Christspiritual joy and joy by the Holy Spirit.   
Notice, also, that it was joy about others, a perfectly unselfish joy. Jesus had seen others blessed, healed, prepared, instructed, made ready to hear more of the Gospeland He rejoiced in that. And He had seen others made useful. Oh, what a mercy it is when you can rejoice in other peoples usefulness! Did God ever bless you very largely and did there come along somebody whom He blessed more than you? Now, I am sure that you rejoiced in that other mans success if he was a hundred miles off! But I am not quite so certain that you rejoiced in it if he came into your Sunday school and had a class that took some of the scholars away from you. I am not quite certain that every minister in the world would leap for joy if a Brother settled close beside him and had twice as large a congregation as he had, and did 10 times as much good. Hearts need a little schooling at such a time as that, for, as the stars love to shine, they sometimes like not only to shine out but to outshine!   
Now shine out as much as you like, but never mind about outshining, for that is emulation of a kind of which Christ will never approve. He rejoiced to see the 70 shining. He delighted to see them all useful. Pray for your Brothers and Sisters, that God may make them more useful than they are and more useful than you are. Did not your Lord say, He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do, also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father, as if it were a delight to the Master that His pupils should, in some respects, excel Him? Remember Moses, when they came to him, and said that Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp? Those two fellows had not been properly ordained, yet they were prophesying in the camp! What did Moses say? Stop them directly. They have not, Rev. before either of their names and certainly they have not D.D., or any of the other letters of the alphabet after their names! Shut those fellows up? No, no! Moses said, Would God that all the Lords people were Prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them! And is not that what Christ would say and have you say? Oh, let us have joy in our hearts when souls are saved, even though we may not be the instruments of their salvation, or any of our denomination, but somebody quite apart from us! God has blessed him and God be blessed for blessing him!   
Our Saviors joy, again, was quiet and devout joy. Jesus rejoiced in spirit. I do not find that He sang a Psalm, or even a hymn from Moody and Sankey, or that He took a timbrel and danced. I think it would have been very much out of place for Him to have done thatfor Him it would have looked very eccentric. But our Savior, when He rejoiced in spirit, prayed and thanked God. The same calm which had sustained Him in His seasons of sorrow, supported Him in His hour of joy and kept Him sober, still, quiet! The Lord give us much of this joy! Still waters, you know, run deep. Let me also say that deep waters run without turmoil. When the river is very deep, there will not be half as much noise as when it is but shallow and, therefore, rattles and raves over the stones which it barely covers!   
Christs was quiet and devout joy and it was also meek and lowly joy. Though He rejoiced in spirit, what He said was, I thank You, O Father. There was no assumption, no taking of anything to Himself. Did not He send out the seventy? Were they not called by Him? Yes, but He said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth. Perhaps God would give us more joy if we were more meek when we had it, but, sometimes, when our heavenly Father trusts us with a few jewels, we hang them in our ears and are as pleased with them as children with new toysand we forget our Father and only remember how pretty we lookas we think. Then the Lord takes them away again. Many a child would have more sweets to eat if they did not make him sick. Many a preacher of the Gospel would have more success if it did not make him proudand many a laborer for the Lord would bring more souls to Christ if there were not danger of his losing his own soul if he were much honored in that way. Our Master, when He rejoiced in spirit, was as meek and as lowly as when He stood before His adversaries and was led as a sheep to the slaughter.   
III. But I must not detain you much longer and, therefore, I come to the last point which is the special one upon which I want to dwell at this time. WHAT WAS THE EXPRESSION OF OUR SAVIORS JOY? When Jesus rejoiced in spirit, how did He show His joy?   
Well, He showed it, first, by thanks to His Father. He said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth. Oh, that our joy might never take the form of a foolish song, but might always be in the shape of thanksgiving or thanks-living, or both of them togethera happy combination thanksgiving with the mouth and thanks-living with the life! Our Savior, I say, praised God when He felt joyful. Do you not think that that should be a lesson to us to try to be joyful before we praise God? Do you feel very dull and heavy? Well, sing! Remember that the Apostle James said, Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms. Psalms are best sung when the heart is glad, therefore seek to shake off your sadness when you come into the House of God! And before you begin to praise the Lord, endeavor to be joyful, cheerful, happy. Did I not say, the other dayDo not leave your bedroom until you feel that everything is right between you and God? I would also add toDo not begin to sing until your heart sings. Try as much as possible to be glad. Does God want slaves to Grace His Throne? It is the heathen who cut themselves with knives and think that their god is pleased with their misery! But our God delights in the joy of His people. Be glad before Him. Let us come before His Presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms. Sing unto the Lord all you people and rejoice before Him. The singing of Gods praises should be accompanied with joyand when there is joy it should be attended with the singing of His praises.  
But why does Jesus Christ thank God? What is His special objective in thanking Him? Well, He thanks Him for a great Truth of God that some of you do not like. I cannot hide it, whether you like it or not. Jesus thanks His Father for the Doctrine of ElectionI thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that 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. With whom does the choice of men lie? With God! And in His choice His Son greatly rejoices! So let it be with uslet Him do what He wills, and let us rejoice in Him! Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. Let Him do whatever He wills, I know that it is right. It is not for us to judge Gods conduct, but to let Gods conduct be to us the rule of our life, the rule of right

*He sits on no precarious throne,   
Nor borrows leave to be,*   
nor does He stand at your bar, or mine, to ask us what He shall do, or what He shall not do. He gives not account of any of His matters. And over the head of us all there rolls the thunder of this Word of GodI will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. No claim can be set up by the creature! None have any merit whatever before Him and, therefore, with that absolute Sovereignty which He claims as God, He distributes His favors according to this rule, Shall I not do as I will with My own? But many hearts cannot bow to that Law of Godthe iron sinew of their neck will not bend to a God who is God! A nominal god is all very well, but a real God of Infinite Power and Divine Sovereignty is rejected by many, but not by His dear Son! He says, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth. We who truly know the Lord, adore the God of electing love! He cannot do wrong. He must be right. And if He chooses to let the wise and prudent be blinded, while He opens the eyes of babes, we thank Him. What we do not understand, we accept with reverent adoration.   
The Savior especially thanks His Father for the chosen ministers round about Him. Somebody might have said, Why, these 70, You are their Leader, but they are a precious poor lot! Look at them! Put the whole 70 together and they would not make one man of the size of a Pharisee, either in property, or in propriety, or in power to boast and say that they have kept the Commandments from their youth up! Why, they are a parcel of sinners, the whole 70 of them! And besides that, look at their coatsnothing but working-mens jackets. There is one of them, Peter, who has an extra coat, but he is only a fisherman. What a lot they are! And these are the men who are to proclaim the religion that is to conquer the world? It is certainly not abreast of the timesit is not up to the modern thought of this periodvery far from it! All that it has gathered is a parcel of poor, illiterate persons.   
Well, the Savior thanks God that He has not given Him any wise men. He thanks God that He has not saved any of the people who think that they have great understanding. He congratulates Himself that, upon the whole, He has the people He likes bestI thank You, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto what? Well, He says, babes. They cannot say anything worse than that of the Lords chosen ministersjust a lot of babies! Jesus thanks God that He has revealed the Truth to these babes and so do I! Oh, Beloved, what a mercy it is that the Lord does, by His Grace, call these babes, while the wise men, and the understanding men are not called!   
Suppose the very wise and prudent had been called to go and preach? What would they have done? Why, in the first place, they would not have gone at all because any prudent man would have said, He sends us forth as lambs in the midst of wolves! That is not prudent, so I shall not go. Certainly no wise men would have gone upon such an errandthey would have said, No, thank you. And so you still find the wise and prudent. They will not go on Christs errands. They have errands of their ownthey have plenty of their own work to dothey are going to reform the world by their own inventions! But to go on Christs errands and simply to say what Christ tells them, oh, no, not they! They have such a lot to say of what they have made out of their own heads that they cannot go out to simply repeat what Christ has said to them.   
Suppose, again, that the 70 had been wise and prudent men? What next would they have done? Why, they would have tinkered the message, for certain! There is one of them who would have said, Well, now, I am going, you see, to a town of very respectable peopleI must tone my message down for them. Another would have said, I am going where they are rather a democratic setI must introduce a little bit of politics of a popular kind to suit them. Another would have said, Well, now, these people will not come and hear me preach the Gospel, so I shall have an entertainment, a penny reading, or something of that kind. All the wise and prudent would have thought that they could do better than Christ told them to dotherefore He was very glad that He had not any of them to pester Him! He had only these who would do just what He told them and say just what He told themand that was exactly the kind of people that He neededmen who would do His bidding without question.   
Then, besides that, if they had been very wise and prudent, they would have inevitably clouded the message, for they would have delivered it in their own grand styleand you know how wise men talk, do you not? Unless you are a very wise man, you cannot understand them. But these poor babes, when they went into a town, talked as the people talked, and everybody could comprehend them! Nowadays, it is thought to be an evidence of lack of education if you talk so that everybody can understand you, but, dear Friends, we are not afraid of what anyone says on that point. Depend upon it, the best education in the world is that which enables you to convey your thoughts to other peoples minds in a way in which you really get them into their brains! These babes went and preached what Christ told them because they did not know anything else. They were men of plain speech-they were Galileans! They had never learned the scholastic style of speechGalilee was a notable place for spoiling the language! These were rough-hewn men and they spoke out their message with all their mightand Christ was very thankful that they were not other than they were, for they did His work right grandly.   
Besides, I think that if they had been wise and prudent, they would not have come back rejoicingthey would have come back with that cold propriety which is most consistent with the dignity of cultured intelligence! Are you not all aware that it is vulgar to be happy, that it betrays the feebleness of your minds if you enjoy anything? The proper thing is to pick the Truth of God to pieces and find all the fault that you can with it. When the Bread of Heaven is set before you, if you are a cultured person, you should not eat it, but try to find out who baked it and whether they put as much yeast in it as usual. Such people always quarrel with the Truth if they can. Sometimes I take up a commentary on some part of the Bible and think that I am going to learn something. And so I do. And when I have learned it, I wish that I had never seen it! A vain attempt is made to take the juice out of Gods wheat and to reduce it to dry, useless husks which cannot cheer the heart, or comfort the spirit. I thank You, Lord, when I get away from these gentlemen, even as You did thank Your Father that there were none of them around You. They would have been almost enough to chill the very life of Christ, Himself.   
Once more, if they had all been wise and prudent, they would have come back, every one of them taking a little of the praise. One wise man would have said, I put that point beautifully down at Chorazin. Another would have said, I drew a wonderful distinction down at Bethsaida. If any good comes of this, another would say, it was that wonderful peroration of my discourse that did it. I must have the credit of it. These poor babes could not think or talk like this, for, if God did anything by them, they were such nobodies that He must have all the Glory!   
Now I have done when I just say to you that I wonder whether this brings comfort to you? One poor soul says, I am not clever. I cannot be saved. Why not? Why not, when God has chosen the foolish things of this world? I often hear a person say, But I have not head enough for these things. You do not need a head so much as you need a heart, for the Grace of God works on the heart, first, and on the head, afterwards. When the head drags the heart, it is often slow work, but when the heart goes first and the head follows, then it is a blessing, indeed! If you love Christ and trust in Him, you have all the head that you need for Eternal Life. O, says one, but I am a person of such small capacity! Never mind. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners whether they are of large capacity or small capacity.   
Have you a teachable spirit? Are you willing to believe what the Holy Spirit reveals? Are you willing to sit at Jesus feet and learn of Him? Are you like the babe that does not doubt its mother, but takes, unquestioningly, the nourishment she gives? If that is so, you are of the kind that God has chosen! Come at once to Him. You cannot understand all mysteries if you need to do so. Give up all your vain attempts to sweep the cobwebs from the sky, or to climb up among the stars. Oh, the questions that people can ask you when they really do not want answers, and if they did, would never receive them! I know some who are lost in their thoughts *Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate, Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute* or some other tremendously knotty question. Why do you got out of your depths? Be a babe and comesimply believe yourself to be a sinner and trust Christ as your Saviorand you will know more than all the philosophers can ever teach you! Come and trust the Lord Jesus Christ and you will find how true it is that He has revealed these things unto babes.   
Are you willing to be what Christ was? He was the childlike Man. He is called, The Holy Child, Jesus. Will you be a child to Him and let Him be a Man for you? Will you take His Book and believe it as you read it? Will you take Him and trust Him as you find Him? Will you take His Cross and rest upon it as your only hope? Then, blessed are you, for you are in the election of Grace! You are one of those whom God has chosen and for whom Christ thanks Him that He did choose people of that quality! And while Christ thanks God, you may thank Him, too, and go home tonight rejoicing! If you are too wise, too clever, too critical to trust Christ, there is no other way to Heavenso you see where you must go. The Lord change your foolish opinion and teach your reason, reasonand your sense a little commonsense, and save you, for His mercys sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON. **LUKE 10:1-22.**

Our Lord was about to send out 70 disciples to preach the Gospel. He had already chosen His 12 Apostles. Now there must be 70 disciples, something like Moses had 70 elders to serve under him. Some have fancifully likened these two sets of men to the 12 wells of water and 70 palm trees at Elim, and certainly they were for the refreshment of the people.

Verse 1. After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place, where He Himself would come. They were to go before Christ and be His heralds. What a mercy it is when the preacher knows that his Master is coming after himwhen he can hear the sound of his Masters feet behind him! What courage it gives him! He knows that, though it is very little that he can do, he is the thin end of the wedge preparing the way for One who can do everything!

2. Therefore said He unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest. The 70 were very few compared with the many that were needed. There were many loiterers about, then, as there are now, but the laborers were few. There were preachers of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, but they were not worth a penny a hundred. But the true laborers, who watched for souls, and preached Christ with all their hearts, were very few. It is the same, today, and, therefore, we are to pray for more laborers. A good minister always desires to see more good ministers. In a trade, every tradesman would be glad if those of the same trade as himself would move to another parish, but in the profession of a Christian minister, the more the merrier! Pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest.

3. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Defenseless, harmless, into the midst of those who would devour you if I did not send you. It would be foolhardiness to go on your own account, but I send you and He who sends His lambs among wolves will take care of them. As I have often reminded you, the lambs and the sheep are very defenseless and yet, after all, there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves. And although it looked as if the wolves would soon devour the sheep, the wolves are extirpated in many a country and the sheep are still prizedand it will be so till the end.

4. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes. This time, when Christ sent out the seventy, He bade them take no provision, for they might depend upon the kindness of the people. Afterwards, when He was about to leave His disciples, He bade them take both purse and scrip, for they were going among an unfriendly people. But on this first mission He knew that there was a kindly feeling towards them, so He said, Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes.

4. And salute no man by the way. Eastern salutations by the way took up a very long timethe people saying a lot of fine nothings to one another. Christian ministers ought to be excused from many of the lengthy courtesies of life, but if they are not excused, if they are faithful, they will take French leave to be excused. We have not time for all those pretty things that some people attend to. If we are to win souls, we must go to work like the kings couriers who turn not aside to attend to anything else, but devote all their energies to the mission on which they are sent.

5, 6. And into whatever house you enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. So that it will not be wasted. Wish well and your well-wishing will do you good, even if it does nobody else good. Our chickens come home to roost. If they are curses, they will come upon ourselves. If they are blessings, they will bless ourselves as well as others.

7, 8. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. And into whatever city you enter, and they receive you eat such things as are set before you. The Jewish Rabbis, in their perambulations, were very particular about food. It is said to have been very difficult to find a dish to their taste. This might be unclean in one way, and that not up to the mark in anotherbut here the Master exempts His ambassadors from attention to these minor matters. They had something better to do than to be always careful about what they should eat or what they should drink, so He said to them, Eat such things as are set before you.

9-11. And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The Kingdom of God is come near unto you. But into whatever city you enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaves on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be you sure of this, that the Kingdom of God is come near unto you. We are not to stop and arguethat is no business of ours. We have to tell our message. If men will receive it, we are glad. If they will not hear it, with a heavy heart we turn aside and go elsewhere. Our work is to proclaim the glorious message of mercy through a dying Savior, salvation through the great Atonement. It is our business to proclaim it and leave itthe responsibility of receiving or rejecting it rests with our hearers.

12-14. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the

Judgment, than for you. Hearing and rejecting the Gospel is the crowning sin of all. Whatever else men are guilty of, if they have not rejected Christ, they have not yet reached the summit of iniquity.

15, 16. And you, Capernaum, which are exalted to Heaven, shall be thrust down to Hell. He that hears you hears Me and he that despises you despises Me; and he that despises Me despises Him that sent Me. If the messenger delivers His message correctly, and as his Master would have him deliver it, the rejection of it, when brought by him, has the same guilt in it as the rejection of Christ, Himself, and the rejection of Christ is the rejection of God! So Jesus tells us here.

17. And the seventy returned again with joy, Not one of the lambs had been eaten by the wolves!   
17. Saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Your name. Christ had not mentioned that in the commission. He sent them to heal the sick. The casting out of devils was included, no doubt, but it was not specifically mentioned, and this being an extra beyond the words of their commission, they were especially delighted with it! Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Your name.   
18-20. And He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this, rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven. That is a higher privilege than to be master over demons, or to be able to tread on serpents! That day of miracles is past, but the power of the Gospel is a spiritual power the same as before. We still cast out devils. Still are men delivered from the dominion of Satan.   
21, 22. In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that 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. All things are delivered to Me of My Father: and no man knows who the Son is, but the Father. You know that He is the Son of God. You know that He is Jesus of Nazareth. But you do not know Him, you cannot know Him, as His Father knows Him! He is known in His fullness only to the Father.   
22. And who the Father is, but the Son, and He to whom the Son will reveal Him. Can you, by searching, find out God? Can you find out the Almighty unto perfection? No, you cannot. The Son of God must reveal His Father to you, or you will never know Him!

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1571 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE JOY OF JESUS   
NO. 1571

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 5, 1880, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that 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. All things   
are delivered to Me of My Father: and no man knows who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son and He to whom the Son will reveal Him.   
Luke 10:21, 22.**

LAST Lords-Day morning we considered the lamentations of Jesus. [#1570 The Lamentations of Jesus.] We will now turn our thoughts to the joys of Jesus. It is remarkable that this is the only instance on record in the Gospels in which our Lord is said to have rejoiced. It stands alone and is, therefore, the more to be prizedIn that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit. He was the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief for our sakes and, therefore, we are not astonished to find few indications of joy in the story of His life. Yet I do not think it would be fair to infer from the fact of a solitary mention of His rejoicing that He did not rejoice at other times. On the contrary, our Lord must, despite His sorrow, have possessed a peaceful, happy spirit.

He was infinitely benevolent and went about doing goodand benevolence always finds a quiet delight in blessing others. The joy of the lame when they leaped and of the blind when they saw must have gladdened the soul of Jesus. To cause happiness to others must bring home to a sympathetic bosom some degree of pleasure. Sir Philip Sydney was known to say, Doing good is the only certainly happy action of a mans life, and assuredly it is hard to see how the love of Jesus could refrain from rejoicing in blessing those around Him. Moreover, our Lord was so pure that He had a well of joy within which could not fail Him. If it is, indeed, true that virtue is true happiness, then Jesus of Nazareth was happy. The poet said

*What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy, The souls calm sunshine and the heartfelt joy, Is virtues prize.*

Such calm and joy must have been the Saviors, though, for our sake, He bowed beneath the heavy load of sorrow.

The perfectly holy God is the perfectly happy God and the perfectly holy Christ, had it not been that He had taken upon Himself our griefs and sicknesses, would have been perfectly happy. And even with our griefs and sicknesses there must have been a deep peace of soul within Him which sustained Him in His deepest woe. Did not the Father, Himself, say of His beloved Son, You love righteousness and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows? Nor is this all, for our blessed Lord lived in unbroken fellowship with the Father and fellowship with God will not permit a soul to abide in darkness for, walking with God, He walks in the Light as God is in the Light. Such a mind may, for certain purposes, come under clouds and glooms, but the Light of God is sown for the righteous and it will speedily break forth as the dawn of day.

Those nights of prayer and days of perfect service must have brought their own calm to the tried heart of the Son of God. Besides, Christ Jesus was a Man of faithHe was faiths highest exposition and example. He is the Author and the Finisher of faith, in whom we see its life, walk and triumph. Our Lord was the Incarnation of perfect confidence in the Fatherin His life all the histories of great Believers are summed up. Read the 11th chapter of Hebrews and see the great cloud of witnesses and then mark how, in the 12th chapter, Paul bids us look to Jesus as though in His Person the whole multitude of the witnesses could be seen!

He it was, who, for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame. His faith must, therefore, have anticipated the reward of His passion and have brought the joy there home to Him even while He sorrowed here. His joy was a light from the lamps of the future which were to be kindled by His death and victory! He had meat to eat that His disciples knew not of for His long-sighted eyes saw further than they and while they mourned His departure, He saw the expediency of it and told them that if they loved Him they would rejoice because He was going to the Father! Be sure of this, that our Lord felt, beneath the great floods of outward affliction, an under-current of joy, for He said, These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full.

What did He mean by this if He had no joy in His people? Could He have spoken so many happy words and so often have said to His disciples, Be of good cheer, if He had been always downcast? But it is still remarkable that our text should be the only recorded instance of His joy, so far as the Evangelists are concerned. It is clear that joy was not a distinguishing feature in our Lords life so as to strike the beholder. Peace may have sat serenely on His brow, but nothing of the exuberant spirits which are seen in some men, for His countenance was marred with lines of care and grief.

We do not hear that He laughed, though it is thrice recorded that He wept and here, for once, as quite unique, we find the Inspired assurance that He rejoiced. Because of its singularity, the record deserves to be looked into with care that we may see the cause of delight so unusual. The words here used are very emphatic. He rejoiced. The Greek word is much stronger than the English renderingit signifies to leap for joy. It is the word of the blessed Virgins song, My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. Strong emotions of delight were visible upon our Lords face and were expressed by the tones of His voice as well as by His Words.

It is clear that He was greatly glad. The text also says, He rejoiced in spirit, that is, deep down in the very center of His Naturein that largest and most capacious part of His human being, the Redeemer rejoiced! Man is body, soul and spirit, but the spirit is the nobler and most vital part and it was with a spiritual, inward and most living joy that the Lord Jesus Christ rejoiced. It was joy of the truest and fullest sort which made the Saviors heart dance! Let us come, then, near to this rejoicing Savior who wraps the garments of praise about Him, perfumed with delight! Let us see if we cannot learn something from His joys, since, I trust, we gathered something from His griefs.

I. First, let us look at our Lord and note that His joy was JOY IN THE FATHERS REVELATION OF THE GOSPEL. I thank You, O Father, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. He rejoices in His Fathers revelation of the Gospel! It was not joy in the fame which had gathered about His name insomuch that John heard of it in prison. It was not joy in the manifest tokens of power that went forth with His commissioners, though they rejoiced that devils were subject unto them. No, it was joy in Gods revealing the Gospel to the sons of men!

I call your attention to the fact that He ascribed all that was done to the Father and rejoiced that the Father was working with Him. His disciples came back to Him and said, Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name. And they spoke not amiss, for the name of Jesus was their strength and deserved honor. But the Lord, with that sacred selfabnegation which was so natural to Him, replies, I thank You, O Father, that You have revealed these things. He takes no honor unto Himself, but ascribes the Glory unto the Father who worked with Him. Imitate Him, O you who call Him Lord! Let the work of the Father be your joy!

If God gives us any success in the preaching of the Gospel, let our joy be that the Fathers power is going forth with His Word! We are not so much to joy in our instrumentality as in the hand which uses the instrument and works by it. Oh, misery! Misery! To be attempting Gospel ministry without God! But oh, bliss, unspeakable bliss to feel that when we lift our hand, Gods hand is lifted, too, and when we speak the Word, the voice of God is ringing through our feeble speech and reaching the hearts of men! It is to true Believers a great joy that the Father is bringing home His wandering children and receiving penitents into His bosom!

The Saviors joy was that through the Fathers Grace men were being enlightened. The 70 disciples had been from city to city, working miracles and preaching the Gospel and their Master was glad when they returned with tidings of successIn that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit. It pleases Jesus when the Gospel has free course and God is glorified thereby. Then, in a measure, He sees of the travail of His soul and is filled with satisfaction. Shall we not find our joy where He finds His? Shall we not enter into the joy of our Lord? Whenever we hear good news of a village evangelized, of a township moved by the glad tidings, of a country long shut up from the Gospel at last opened to the Word of God, let us feel our highest and deepest joy!

Rather let us rejoice in this than in business prosperity or personal advantage. What if we can find no joy in our own circumstances? What if even spiritual affairs within our soul are full of difficulty? Let us joy and rejoice that God the Father is revealing the Light of His Gospel among the sons of men! Be this our highest wish, Your kingdom come, and in that coming kingdom let us find our utmost happiness! Be sure that the joy which warmed the heart of Christ can do us no harmit must be a pure, sacred and ennobling joy and, therefore, let us indulge in it very largely! Christs joy lay in the Fathers sending forth His Light and His Truth making men to see things which Prophets and kings had desired to behold, but had not been favored to see. Jesus rejoiced in this, that the blessings of Divine Grace were being revealed by the Father!

Further, our Saviors joy lay very much in this, that this revelation to men was being made through such humble instruments. We read that, He lifted up His eyes on His disciples and said, Blessed be you poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. There was not among the 12 or the 70, one person of any social status. They were the common people of the field and the sea. In later years Paul was raised upa man richly endowed in learning, whose great abilities were used by the Lordbut the first ministers of Christ were a band of fishermen and countrymen, altogether unknown in the schools of learning and regarded as unlearned and ignorant men.

The grandest era in the worlds history was ushered in by nobodies! By persons who, like their Leader, were despised and rejected of men! To any one of them it might have been said, For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 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, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence.

Observe carefully that the persons whom our Lord had been employing were not only obscure in origin, but they were of a low degree of spiritual understanding. They were, in fact, babes in Grace as well as worldly wisdom! Their joy, when they came back to tell what had been done, was evidently childish as well as gracious. They rejoiced in their success as children do in their little achievements. But their Lord was thankful because He saw the open-heartedness and the simplicity of their characters in the gladsome way in which they cried, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Your name. And He thanked God that by such babes as these, such children, such true-hearted children and yet such mere children, He was pleased to make known His Word among the sons of men!

Rest you sure that our Lord, even at this day, finds a delight in the weakness of the instruments He uses   
*He takes the fool and makes him know   
The mysteries of His Grace;   
To bring aspiring wisdom low,   
And all its pride abase.*

Not you, you scribes who have counted every letter of the Old Testament, does He elect to be filled with the Spirit! Not you, you Pharisees who so abound in outward religion, does He choose to spread the inward Life and Light! Not you, you Sadducees who are versed in skeptical philosophy and boast your cleverness, does He call to preach His Gospel to the poor! He has taken to be the heralds of His Glory men from the sea of Galilee whom you despisesimple-hearted men ready to learnand then as ready to proclaim, again, the message of salvation! Our Lord was by no means displeased with the absence of culture and learning in His followers, for the culture and learning of the period were utter vanity!

He was glad to see that they did not pretend to wisdom or astuteness, but came to Him in all simplicity to accept His teaching because they believed Him to be the Son of God. Jesus rejoiced in spirit about this. And yet, further, His great joy was that the converts were of such a character as they were. You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. It is true that certain persons sneeringly asked, Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in Him? There were some who thought little of Jesus because those whom they imagined to be learned men had not expressed their approval of His cause. Our Lord, Himself, had no concern in that direction, but called the Pharisees blind and the scribes hypocrites, as they assuredly were!

Other voices may have inquired, Who are these that follow Jesus? Of what class are His converts? The answer would have been, They are rustics, fishermen and common people with, here and there, a woman of substance and a man of means. The bulk of them are the poor to whom, for the first time, the Gospel is preached. Such have gathered to Christ and received His Word. Some even said that a parcel of boys and girls were in the streets crying, Hosanna, and this showed how commonplace the Preacher was. At this day I have heard the Lords people spoken of as a poor set of people of no positiona lot of persons whose names will never be knowna mere assembly of Jack, Tom, Harry, Mary, Susan and the rest.

This was the very thing to which Jesus refers with thankfulness! He was glad that He was surrounded by unsophisticated, childlike natures, rather than by Pharisees and scribes who, even if they are converted, are sure to bring some of their old manners with them. He was glad that the Father had revealed His Light and His salvation to those who were lowly and humble, who, though poor in this world, were rich in faith, giving glory to God. Thus you see that the very fact which certain very superior people fling in our teeth as a disgrace, was to our Savior a subject of joy! I have heard foolish ones sneer at certain Churches which are earnest for the Truth of God by affectedly asking, Who are they? A mob of common people, tradesmen or working men and the like. Are there any of the aristocracy among them? Do you find any of the highly intellectual in their ranks?

What if we do not? We shall not, therefore, sorrow, but join with Jesus in saying, We thank You, O Father, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. Christ found Himself at home among those open-hearted folks that gathered around Him, for He was, Himself, a Child-Man, who wore His heart upon His sleeve, boasting of no wisdom though He was Wisdom itself! Our Lord never sought Himself, as the wise and prudent of His age did. He was meek and lowly in heart and, therefore, found Himself at home among a people who were willing to receive His teaching and eager to proclaim it, again, to their countrymen. And so He blessed and praised God that such were chosen.

Oh, Friends, it is not that Christ would not have the greatest come to Him! It is not that Christ would not have the learned come to Him! But so it is that His greatest joy is that those come who, whatever the greatness or the littleness of their learning, are childlike in spirit and, like babes, are willing to learn and prepared to receive what He shall teach them! He was glad to receive persons with lowly notions of their own intelligence and a supreme belief in the veracity of their great Teacher. If those who are reckoned to be learned, profess to come to Christ, they are generally a trial to the Church. All the merely human learning that has ever come unto the Church has, as a rule, been mischievous to itand it always needs great Grace to keep it in its right place.

At first came the Gnostics with their philosophy and into what perils they dragged the Church of God, I cannot stop to tell you! Then arose others out of whose wisdom grew Arianism and the Church was well-near withered to her very heart by that deadly form of heresy! The schoolmen did for her much the same and to this day whenever any of the would-bethought-wise men meddle with religion, they tell us that the plain Word of God, as we read it, must be interpreted by modern thought and that it bears another meaning which only the cultured can possibly comprehend. When philosophy invades the domain of Revelation, it ends in perverting the Gospel and in bringing in another gospel which is not another.

It is with human wisdom as it is with human richeshow difficult shall they that have it enter into the Kingdom of God! True wisdom is another thingthat is a gift which comes from above and causes no puffing up of the heart, for it adores the God from whom it came! The wisdom which is true and real, the Lord is prepared to give to those who confess their ignoranceto those who will be babes in His sight. It is not ignorance which God loves, but conceit that He hates! Knowledge is good, but the affectation of it is evil! O for more true wisdom! May God give us much of it and may those who are babes, as yet, come to be men of full stature in Christ Jesus! Yet forget not your Lords joy in the character of His converts, but remember the lines in which the poet of the sanctuary paraphrases our text

*Jesus, the man of constant grief,   
A mourner all His days,   
His Spirit once rejoiced aloud,   
And turned His joy to praise.   
Father, I thank Your wondrous love,   
That has revealed Your Son   
To men unlearned and to babes   
Has made Your Gospel known.   
The mysteries of redeeming Grace   
Are hidden from the wise,   
While pride and carnal reasoning join   
To swell and blind their eyes.*

Our Lords joy sprang from one other source, namely, His view of the manner in which God was pleased to save His people. It was by revealing these things to them. There is, then, to every man who is saved, a revelation, not of anything over and above what is given us in the Word of God, but of that same Truth of God to himself, personally, and with power. In the Word of God is the Light of God, but what is needed is that each mans eyes should be opened by the finger of God to see it! Truth in the Scriptures will never save till it becomes the Truth of God in the heartit must be revealed unto the most unprejudiced and true-hearted.

Even men of childlike spirits and receptive natures will not see the Truth unless it is especially revealed to them. There must be a work of the Father through the Holy Spirit upon each intellect and mind before it can perceive the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. Therefore, when unregenerate men tell us that they cannot see the beauty of the Gospel, we are not at all astonishedwe never thought they could! And likewise with boastful men of culture, for we knew that they would say so! Blind men are little pleased with color and deaf men care little for music. Human wisdom cannot make a man without eyes see the Light of God!

What do you know about the Gospel, oh you blinded wise men? What judges can you be of the Light of Revelation who seal up your eyes with the mud of your own cleverness and then say you cannot see? Christ never intended that you should! He will only reveal Himself as He pleases and He has pleased to do this to another kind of persons from what you are. Oh, you that are wise in your own conceit, the gate of true Wisdom is barred against you! You cannot, by searching, discover God and when He graciously reveals Himself you refuse to see Him and, therefore, it is just that you should perish in the dark! Well do you deserve this judgment. Let justice be done!

That God had been pleased to reveal Himself to many through the preaching of the 70 was a great joy to Jesus and let us also rejoice whenever God reveals Himself to men! Let us be glad when one who is simple in heart is made a child by Divine Grace through being born again. Let us, furthermore, rejoice whenever conversion is worked by instruments that cannot possibly claim the glory of it. Let us praise and bless God that salvation is His own work from first to last! Come, all you who love the Father and say, with the great Firstborn, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that 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.

II. I have thus tried, as far as I am able, to explain the cause of the Saviors joy. I would now call your attention to HIS MODE OF EXPRESSING THAT JOY. I have noticed some kind of joy in conversions which has not been wise in its expression, but has savored of glorying in the flesh. Oh, we have had a wonderful time, we have had a blessed season! We have been visited by those dear men and we have exerted ourselves in downright earnest to get up a revival. We have done wonders. Such talk will not do! Hear how the Savior speaks. His joy finds tongue in thanksgivingI thank You, O Father. He ascribes the work to the Father and then renders all the praise to Him. This is the eloquence of joyI thank You, O Father.

Brothers and Sisters, whenever you are happy sing hymns of thanksgiving! Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms. The most fit language for joy, whether it is on earth or in Heaven, is adoration and thanksgiving to God! Blessed be the name of the Lord that we are gladdened in the harvest field of Christian work, for it is He that gives Seed to the sower and causes the Word to spring up and bring forth fruit a hundred-fold. Our Lord found expression for His joy in declaring the Fathers sovereignty. I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth. Some shrink back from the idea of God as Lord of all things above and below. To them the free will of man seems the greatest of all facts and, lest there should be the slightest intrusion upon mans domain, they would have God limited as to His absolute power.

To magnify man they would minimize God! You will hear them talking against those of us who magnify Divine Sovereignty and imputing to us the notion of a certain arbitrariness in God, although such a thought has never entered our minds! Jehovah, who gives no account of His matters, but orders all things according to the good pleasure of His will, is never arbitrary, unjust, or tyrannicaland yet He is absolute and uncontrolleda Sovereign who reigns by His own self-existent power. He is, Himself, the source and origin of all law. He can be trusted with absolute Sovereignty because He is Infinite Love and Infinite Goodness. I will go the utmost length as to the absolute supremacy of God and His right to do as He wills and especially to do as He wills with His own, which Gospel Grace most certainly is.

He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What are You doing? When Christ was most glad He expressed that gladness by ascribing unto God an Infinite Sovereignty and shall that Truth of God be gloomy to us? No, rather we will, each one, view the work of the Fathers Grace and cry, I thank You, O Father and I thank You all the more because I know that You are Lord of Heaven and earth! If I am addressing any who quarrel with the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God, I would advise them to cease their rebellion, for the Lord reigns. Let them at least go as far as the Psalm, Let the people tremble even if they cannot go a little further and sing, The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.

Power and rule are best in the hands of the great Jehovah who always links together, in His own single Character both Fatherhood and Sovereignty. I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth. Dismiss from your minds all caricatures of the doctrine and receive it in its purest formthe Lord is king forever and ever. Hallelujah! Your joy, if it is deeply spiritual and very great, will never find room enough for the sweep of its Atlantic waves till you delight yourself in the absolute supremacy of God. The deep groundswell of delight within the Redeemers soul could find no grander space over which it could expand its force than the unlimited power and dominion of the Lord of Heaven and earthwhose key it is which opens or shuts the kingdom of Heavenwhose Word it is which hides or reveals the things of eternity!

Our Lord delighted in the special act of Sovereignty which was before Him, that the Lord had hid these things from the wise and prudent and had revealed them unto babes. He communed with God in it! He took pleasure in it and said, Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. His voice, as it were, went with the Fathers voice. He agreed with the Fathers choice, He rejoiced in it, He triumphed in it! The will of the Father was the will of Christ and He had fellowship with the Father in every act of His Sovereign choice, yes, He magnified God for it in His inmost spirit! He says, Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight, for He knew that what seems good to God must be good. Some things seem good to us which are evilbut that which seems good to God is good!

Jesus praises God about it for no other reason than it is Gods good pleasure that it should be so. Oh, what a state of heart it will be for you and me to get into when we can express our highest joy by a perfect acquiescence in the will of God, whatever that will may be! See here, Brothers and Sisters, the road to contentment, to peace, to happiness, yes, heavenly life this side of the grave! If you ever come to feel that what pleases God pleases you, you will be glad, even, in affliction and tribulation!

If your heart is ever schooled down to accept as your will that which is Gods will and to believe anything to be good because God thinks it good, then you may go through the rest of your days singing and waiting till your Lord takes you to His bosom! Soon will you rise to the place where all the singers meet and sing forever unto God and the Lamball self and rebellion being forever banished. Herein, then, Christ found a channel for His joyin thanksgiving, in magnifying the Divine Sovereignty, in having communion with it and in delighting in it!

III. Thirdly and briefly, I want you to see OUR LORDS EXPLANATION OF THE FATHERS ACT. The Father had been pleased to hide these things from the wise and prudent and to reveal them unto babes. And Jesus Christ is perfectly satisfied with that order of things, quite content with the kind of converts He has and the kind of preachers that God had given Him. For, first, the Lord Jesus does not need prestige. Read the 22nd verseAll things are delivered to Me of My Father. A mere pretender, when he begins to prophesy and set himself up for a religious leaderhow pleased he is when some learned doctor endorses his claims! If some man of wealth and station comes to his side, how he plumes himself!

The Savior of our souls sought no such aids. The verdict of the worlds literary intelligentsia could not make His Word more truthful than it is, nor more convincing, for its power lies in the Spirit which reveals it. If great men say Yes, they will not make His doctrine more sure! Nor will they make it less truthful if they all say, No. Prestige for Christ? It is blasphemy to think of such a thing! All things, He says, are delivered to Me of My Father. High Priests and leaders of religion denounce Him, but all things are delivered to Him of His Father! The Sanhedrim determines to put Him down, but all things are delivered to Him of the Father! The learned deride His claims to be the Messiah! What does it matter to Christ? The Father has committed all things into His hands! He stands alone and asks for no allies. His own power, unborrowed and unaided, is quite sufficient for His purposes.

Do you think, Brothers and Sisters, that we are going to stop our preaching of the Gospel until we shall have the so-called culture and intellect of the age upon our side to say, It is even so? Not we! But rather do we believe God in the teeth of the wiseacres and say, Let God be true and every man a liar! Jesus needs no imprimatur from scholars, no patronage from princes, no apologies from orators! The pomp and power and wisdom and cunning of the world were not with Him and He thanks God that He is not encumbered with such doubtful gain, but that this Truth has been revealed to those who are not wise in their own eyes, nor intelligent in their own esteem, but, like children, willing to learn from God and glad to believe all that He reveals!

See how the Lord explains it further, by showing that human wisdom cannot discover God. No man knows who the Son is but the Father and who the Father is but the Son. No man though he is a master in Israel! Men of science may puzzle their brains and with great ingenuity they may try to thread the intricacies of the unknown, but they must err from the truth if they refuse the Revelation of God! Such a thing as natural religion, spontaneously born of mans intellect, does not exist. Oh, you say, surely there is much of it! I say that whatever is truly religious in it was borrowed from Revelation and has been handed down by tradition! Talk of comparative religionsthere is but one and the other pretenders have stolen certain of its clothes.

Men see, no doubt, much of God in Nature, but they would not have done so had there been no Revelation. First came the Light through Revelation and then, afterwards, when men saw it reflected from various objects, they dreamed that the Light came out of the reflectors! Men hear something of revealed Truth and when their thoughts run in that line, that which they have heard is awakened in their minds and they think themselves the inventors. God is not known except as He reveals Himself, nor can He be discovered by human ingenuity! Carnal wit and thought tend not that way, but tend from God unto blackest darkness. God is ONLY to be known THROUGH CHRIST, so the text saysNo man knows who the Father is but the Son and He to whom the Son will reveal Him.

As the light, after God had created it, was lodged in the sun, so is all knowledge of God treasured up in Christ as the Sun of Righteousness. He it is that in Himself has Light, the Light that lightens every man that comes into the world, if he is lightened at all. We must receive Christ or abide in darkness! Yes, and the Light which is in Christ is not perceptible by any man except by revelation. What does the text say?No man knows who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son and He to whom the Son will reveal Him. There must be a special and distinct revelation of Christ and of the Father by Christ to each man, or else he will remain in blindness to the day of his death. The power, then, which lies in merely human wisdom is a force which often hinders men from coming under the influence of revelation. Only by revelation can they know and by a revelation personally receive.

But the man is so wise that he does not want to be taughthe can find it out for himself. Yield himself to an Infallible Book or an Infallible Spirit? Not he! Well, then, because of his very wisdom, he becomes incapable of learning! Truth to tell, what is human wisdom? The supposed wisdom of man is follythat is the short for it all. They write a history, sometimes, of religious thought and of the various phases through which Christianity has gone and on this they ground remarks! But I should like somebody to write a truthful history of philosophy. The history of philosophy is a record of the insanities of mankinda catalog of lunacies! You shall see one generation of philosophers busily engaged in refuting those that went before them and doing it very well, indeed!

But what will the next generation do? Why, refute this one! The philosophies that were current 100 years ago are all exploded, now, and all the teachings of today, except such as are clear matters of fact, will be exploded before I go down to my grave if I live to be gray-headed! There is not a philosopher now living that can be sure but what there is some other fact to yet be discovered which will upset every hypothesis that he has sent forth into the world! Philosophers who conceitedly glory over believers in Revelation are fools, for they know nothing with certainty and absolute certainty appertains only to Divine Revelation! In those who pretend to wisdom apart from God, folly abounds. There is no light in them, nor in any man except that which comes from the Spirit of God.

That wisdom which sets itself up apart from God is atheism, because God knows and He says to man, I will teach you. I will reveal Myself to you by My Son. But that wisdom says, We do not want to be taughtwe know by ourselves. Then you are a rival to God! You pretend to be superior to God since you are not willing to learn of Him, but will rather trust yourself. This folly and this atheism are the reasons why God hides His mind from the wise and the cleverthey reject Him and, therefore, He gives them over to a judicial blindness and Christ thanks Him that He does, for it is but justice that He should do so.

When the Lord is pleased to give to any man a childlike spirit, then is he on the road to knowledge. This is true even in science, itself. The secrets of Nature will never be revealed to the man who believes that he already knows them. Nature herself does not teach the man who comes to her with prejudice. A man who thinks he knows beforehand, sits down to study Nature and what does he generally discover? Well, he learnedly dreams of a universal solvent, or that the baser metals can be transmuted into gold, or that there is a perpetual motion. Those, you say, are things philosophers believed years ago. Yes, but their theories of today are just as stupid and the science of today will be the jest of the next century!

The greatest absurdities have been the pets of philosophy for hundreds of years and why was it that men did not know better? Because they did not go to Nature and ask her to teach them what was factthey made an hypothesis and then they went to Nature to force her to prove it, as they do now. They start with a prejudgment of what they would like to be and then take facts and twist them round into their system and so they blind themselves by their own wisdom! Well, if it is so in Nature and I am sure it is, it is certainly more so in Grace, for when a man comes to the Word of God and says, Now, I know theology beforehand. I do not come here to find my creed in the Bible and learn it like a child, but I come to turn texts about and make them fit into my system. Well, he will blind himself and will be a fool and it is right he should be blinded, for has he not done that willfully which must of necessity lead to such an end?

Brethren, simple teachableness is the first essential for the reception of a Revelation from God and if you have it today, if you are seeking after the Truth of God, if you are crying after her and if you are willing that God should reveal her to youif you are anxious that He should reveal His Truth to you in Christyou are the sort of person upon whom God in Sovereignty looks with Divine favor and unto such as you will He reveal Himself. What is needed is faith, a childlike, receptive faithnot faith in a pope, not faith in a man, not faith in an old established creed, but faith in God! Oh, my Hearer, if you are willing to learn of Him, you shall not be left uninstructed!

Now a lesson or two and I have done. The first lesson to be learned is this. If great men, if eminent men, if so-called learned men are not converted, do not be cast down about itit is not likely they will be. In the next place, if many converts are obscure persons, persons without note or name, do not be at all disgusted with that fact. Who are you that you should be? Who are you that you should despise any upon whom God has looked in favor? Rather rejoice exceedingly with your Lord that God has chosen the despised and you with them!

Next, learn that the Sovereignty of God is always exercised in such a way that the pure in heart may always rejoice in it. God never did a Sovereign act that the loving Christ, Himself, could not rejoice in. Be you content, therefore, to leave everything in the hands of God that you do not understand and when His way is in the sea, be quite as glad as when His way is in the sanctuary! When His footsteps are not known, feel that they are quite as righteous and quite as holy as when you can perceive the path in which He moves. The ultimate honor of the Gospel is secured unto God alonelet that be our last lesson.

When the wind-up of all things shall come, there shall be no honor to any of us, nor would we desire it. But out of it all, out of the choice of each one and out of the Revelation made to each one, will come up, multiplied into a thousand thunders, the voice as of Christ in His whole mystical body, I thank You, O Father. This shall be the song of Heaven concerning the whole matteras well concerning the lost as the saved. I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth. There shall be no quibbling among the pure in heart, nor questions among the perfected spirits, but the whole family reviewing the whole of the Fathers governmentthe hiding as well as the revealing, shall at the last say, Christ leading the utteranceI thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes.

Brothers and Sisters, let us learn our need of a personal revelation! Let us seek it if we have not yet received it! With a childlike spirit let us seek it in Christ, for only He can reveal the Father to us! And when we have it, let it be our joy that we see Him revealing it to others and let this be our prayer, that the God of Jacob would yet bring others unto Christ who shall rejoice in the Light of God that has made glad our eyes! The Lord be with you. Amen.

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Sermon #1360 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE GOOD SAMARITAN   
NO. 1360

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, JUNE 17, 1877, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

[On behalf of the Hospitals of London.]

**And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the   
Law? How Do you read it? And he, answering, said, 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 your neighbor as yourself.   
And He said unto him, You have answered right; do this, and you shall live.   
But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? And Jesus, answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine,   
and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatever you spend more, when I come again, I will repay you. Which now of these three, do you think, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, he that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do you likewise.   
Luke 10:25-37.**

OUR text is the whole story of the Samaritan, but as that is very long, let us, for our memories sake, consider the exhortation in the 37th verse to be our text. Go, and do you likewise. There are certain persons in the world who will not allow the preacher to speak upon anything but those doctrinal statements concerning the way of salvation which are known as the Gospel. If the preacher shall insist upon some virtue or practical Grace, they straightway say that he is not preaching the Gospel, that he has become legal and is a mere moral teacher. We do not stand in any awe of such criticism, for we clearly perceive that our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, would very frequently have come under it.

Read the Sermon on the Mount and judge whether certain people would be content to hear the likes of it preached to them on the Sabbath. They would condemn it as containing very little Gospel and too much about good works. Our Lord was a great practical Preacher. He frequently delivered addresses in which He made answer to questioners, or gave direction to seekers, or upbraided offendersand He gave a prominence to practical truth such as some of His ministers dare not imitate! Jesus tells us over and over again the manner in which we are to live towards our fellow men and He lays great stress upon the love which should shine throughout the Christian character.

The story of the good Samaritan, which is now before us, is a case in point, for our Lord is explaining, there, a point which arose out of the question, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? The question is legal and the answer is to the point. But let it never be forgotten that what the Law demands of us, the Gospel produces in us. The Law tells us what we ought to be and it is one objective of the Gospel to raise us to that condition. Therefore our Saviors teaching, though it is eminently practical, is always evangelical. Even in expounding the Law He has always a Gospel design. Two ends are served by His setting up a high standard of duty. On the one He slays the self-righteousness which claims to have kept the Law by making men feel the impossibility of salvation by their own works.

And, on the other hand, He calls Believers away from all content with the mere decencies of life and the routine of outward religion and stimulates them to seek after the highest degree of holinessindeed, after that excellence of character which only His Grace can give! This morning I trust that though I keep very much to practical points, I shall be guided by the Spirit of Holiness and shall not be guilty of legality, nor will any of you be led into it. I shall not hold up the love of our neighbor as a condition of salvation, but as a fruit of it. I shall not speak of obedience to the Law as the road to Heaven, but I shall show you the pathway which is to be followed by the faith which works by love. Let us proceed to the parable at once.

I. Our first observation will be that THE WORLD IS FULL OF AFFLICTION. This story is but one among a thousand based upon an unhappy occurrence. A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves. He went upon a short journey and almost lost his life on the road. We are never secure from troubleit meets us around the family hearth and causes us to suffer in our own persons or in those of the dearest relatives. It walks into our shops and counting-houses and tries us and when we leave home it becomes our fellow traveler and communes with us on the road.

Although affliction comes not forth of the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward. Frequently the greater afflictions are not occasioned by the fault of the sufferer. Nobody could blame the poor Jew, that when he was going down to Jericho about his business, the thieves beset him and demanded his money, and that when he made some little resistance they wounded him, stripped him and left him half dead. How could he be blamed? It was to him a pure misfortune. Believe me, there is a great deal of sorrow in the world which does not arise out of the vice or folly of the persons enduring itit comes from the hand of God upon the sufferer, not because he is a sinner above othersbut for wise ends unknown to us.

Now, this is the kind of distress which, above all others, demands Christian sympathy and the very kind which abounds in our hospitals. The man is not to blame for lying there beaten and bruisedthose gaping wounds from which his life is oozing are not of his own inflicting, nor received in a drunken brawl or through attempting a foolhardy feat. He suffers from no fault of his own and, therefore, he has a pressing claim upon the benevolence of his fellow men. Still, very much distress is caused by the wickedness of others. The poor Jew on the road to Jericho was the victim of the thieves who wounded him and left him half dead. Man is mans worst enemy!

If man were but tamed to peace, the wildest beast in the world would be subdued. And if evil were purged from mens hearts, the major part of the ills of life would cease at once! The drunks wastefulness and brutality, the proud mans scorn, the oppressors cruelty, the slanderers lie, the tricksters cheat, the heartless mans grinding of the faces of the poor these, all put together, are the roots of almost all the poisonous weeds which multiply upon the face of the earth to our shame and sorrow. If dominant sins could be taken away, as blessed be God they shall when Christ has triumphed through the world, much of human sorrow would be relieved.

When we see innocent persons suffering as the result of the sin of others, our pity should be awakened. How many there are of little children starving and pining into chronic disease through a fathers drunkenness which keeps the table bare! Wives, too, who work hard, are brought down to pining sickness and painful disease by the laziness and cruelty of those who should have cherished them. Laborers, too, are often sorely oppressed in their wages and have to work themselves to deaths door to earn a pittance. Those are the people who ought to have our sympathy when accident or disease bring them to the hospital gates, wounded and half dead.

The man in the parable was quite helpless. He could do nothing for himself. There he must lie and diethose huge wounds must bleed his very soul away unless a generous hand shall interfere. It is as much as he can do to groan. He cannot even dress his wounds, much less arise and seek shelter! He is bleeding to death among the pitiless rocks on the descent to Jericho and he must leave his body to be fed upon by hawks and crows unless some friend shall come to his help. When a man can help himself and does not, he deserves to suffer. When a man flings away opportunities by his idleness or self-indulgence, a measure of suffering ought to be permitted to him as a cure for his vices.

But when persons are sick or injured and are unable to pay for the aid of the nurse and the physician, then is the time when true-hearted philanthropy should promptly step in and do its best. So our Savior teaches us here. Certain paths of life are peculiarly subject to affliction. The way which led from Jerusalem to Jericho was always infested by robbers. Jerome tells us that it was called the bloody way on account of the frequent highway robberies and murders which were committed there. And it is not so long ago as to be beyond the memory of man that an English traveler met his death on that road, while even very recent travelers tell us that they have been either threatened or actually attacked in that particularly gloomy regionthe desert which goes down to the city of palm trees.

So, also, in the world around us there are paths of life which are highly dangerous and fearfully haunted by disease and accident. Years ago there were many trades in which, from lack of precaution, death slew its thousands. I thank God that sanitary and precautionary laws are better regarded and mens lives are thought to be somewhat more precious. Yet there are still ways of life which may each be called the bloody way

pursuits which are necessary to the community, but highly dangerous to those who follow them. Our mines, our railways and our seas show a terrible roll of suffering and death. Long hours in ill-ventilated workrooms are accountable for thousands of lives and so are stinted wages, which prevent a sufficiency of food from being procured. Many a needlewomans way of life is truly a path of blood!

When I think of the multitudes of our working people in this city who have to live in close, unhealthy rooms, crowded together in lanes and courts where the air is stagnant, I do not hesitate to say that much of the road which has to be trod by the poor of London is as much deserving of the name of the way of blood as the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. If they do not lose their money it is because they never have it! If they do not fall among thieves, they fall among diseases which practically wound them and leave them half dead.

Now, if you have not to engage in such avocations. If your pathway does not lead you from Jerusalem to Jericho, but takes you, perhaps, full often from Jerusalem to Bethany where you can enjoy the sweetnesses of domestic love and the delights of Christian fellowship, you ought to be very thankful and be all the more ready to assist those who, for your sakes, or for the benefit of society at large, have to follow the more dangerous roads of life. Do you not agree with me that such persons ought to be among the first to receive our Christian kindness? Such abound in our hospitals and elsewhere. Let that stand. It is clear that there is a great deal of affliction in the world and much of it is of the sort which deserves to be relieved at once!

II. Secondly, THERE ARE MANY WHO NEVER RELIEVE AFFLICTION. Our Savior tells us of two, at least, who passed by on the other side and I suppose He might have prolonged the parable so as to have mentioned two dozen if He had chosen to do soand even then He might have been content to mention but one good Samaritan, for I hardly think that there is one good Samaritan to two heartless persons. I wish there were, but I fear the good Samaritans are very few in proportion to the number who act the part of the priest and the Levite.

Now, notice who the persons were that refused to render aid to the man in distress. First, they were brought to the spot by Gods Providence on purpose to do so. What better thing could the Lord, Himself, do for the poor half-dead man than to bring some man to help him? An angel could not well have met the case. How could an angel, never wounded, understand binding up wounds and pouring in wine and oil? No, a man was needed who would know what was necessary! Someone was needed who would, with brotherly sympathy, cheer the mind while doctoring the body. In our English version we read, By chance there came down a certain priest that way, but learned Greek scholars read it, By a coincidence.

It was in the order of Divine Providence that a priest should come first to this afflicted person, so that he might go and examine the case as a man of education and skill. And then when the Levite came afterwards, he would be able to carry on what the priest startedand if one could not carry the poor manthe two might, between them, be able to carry him to the inn, or one might remain to guard him while the other ran for help. God brought them to this position, but they willfully refused the sacred duty which Providence and humanity demanded of them! Now, you that are wealthy are sent into our city on purpose that you may have compassion upon the sick, the wounded, the poor and the needy. Gods intent in endowing any person with more substance than he needs is that he may have the pleasurable office, or rather let me say, the delightful privilege, of relieving need and woe!

Alas, how many there are who consider that store which God has put into their hands on purpose for the poor and needy to be only so much provision for their excessive luxurya luxury which pampers them but yields them neither benefit nor pleasure! Others dream that wealth is given them that they may keep it under lock and key, cankering and corroding, breeding covetousness and care. Who dares roll a stone over the wells mouth when thirst is raging all around? Who dares keep the bread from the women and the children who are ready to gnaw their own arms for hunger? Above all, who dares allow the sufferer to writhe in agony uncared for, and the sick to pine into their graves unnursed?

This is no small sin! It is a crime to be answered to the Judge when He shall come to judge the quick and dead! Those people who neglected the poor man were brought there on purpose to relieve him, even as you are, and yet they passed by on the other side. They were both of them people, too, who ought to have relieved him, because they were very familiar with things which should have softened their hearts. If I understand the passage, the priest was coming down from Jerusalem. I have often wondered which way he was goingwhether he was going up to the Temple and was in a hurry to be in time for fear of keeping the congregation waitingor whether he had fulfilled his duty and had finished his months course at the temple and was going home.

I conclude that he was going from Jerusalem to Jericho, because it says, By chance there came down a certain priest that way. Now to the metropolis it is always, going upgoing up to London, or up to Jerusalemand as this priest was coming down, he was going to Jericho. It was quite literally going down, for Jericho lies very low. I conclude that he was going home to Jericho, after having fulfilled his months engagements in the Temple where he had been familiar with the worship of the Most High. He had been, in that month, as near to God as man could be, serving amidst sacrifices and holy Psalms and solemn prayers! And yet he had not learned how to make a sacrifice, himself! He had heard those prophetic words which say, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, but he was entirely forgetful of such teaching! He had often read that Law, You shall love your neighbor as yourself, but he regarded it not.

The Levite had not been quite so closely engaged in the sanctuary as the priest, but he had taken his share in holy work and yet he came away from it with a hard heart. This is a sad fact. Both men had been near to God, but were not like He. Dear people, you may spend Sabbath after Sabbath in the worship of God, or what you think to be so, and you may behold Christ Jesus set forth visibly crucified among youand themes which ought to turn a heart of stone to flesh may pass before your minds and, nevertheless, you may return into the world to be as miserly as

everand to have as little feeling towards your fellow men as before! It ought not to be so. I beseech you suffer it not to be so in any case again.

These two persons, moreover, were bound by their profession to have helped this man, for though it was originally said of the high priest, yet I think it could be said of any priest, that he was taken from among men that he might have compassion. If anywhere there should be compassion towards men, it should be in the heart of the priest who is chosen to speak for God to men and for men to God. No stone should ever be found in his bosom. He should be gentle, generous-hearted kindly, full of sympathy and tenderness. But this priest was not so, nor was the Levite who ought to have followed in his wake.

And oh, you Christian ministers and all of you who teach in schools, or who undertake any service of Christian ministryand you ought all to do so for the Lord has made all His people to be priests unto Himthere ought to be in you from your very profession, a readiness of heart towards kind actions for those who need them! And there is one thing to be mentioned, also, against this priest and Levitethey were very well aware of the mans condition. They came close to him and saw his state. It is a narrow track way down to Jericho and they were obliged to go almost over his wounded body. The first comer looked at him, but he hurried on. The second appears to have made a further investigation, to have had sufficient curiosity, at any rate, to begin to examine the state of the case. But his curiosity being satisfied, his compassion was not awakened and he hurried away.

Half the neglect of the sick poor arises from not knowing that there are such cases, but many remain willfully in ignorance and such ignorance is no available excuse! In the case of the hospitals for which we plead today, you know that there are persons in them at this moment suffering persons suffering grievously for no fault of their ownand you know that these need your aid. As I rode, the other evening, by that noble building on our side of the water, St. Thomas Hospital, I could not help meditating upon what a mass of pain and suffering was gathered within those walls. But then I thanked God that it was within those walls where succor would be most surely rendered to it to the best of human ability. So you know that there is poverty and sickness around you. And if you pass by on the other side you will have looked at it, you will have known about itand on your heads will be the criminality of having left the wounded man unhelped!

Yet the pair had capital excuses! Both the priest and the Levite had excellent reasons for neglecting the bleeding man. I never knew a man refuse to help the poor who failed to give at least one admirable excuse! I believe there is no man on earth, who wickedly rejects the plea of need, who is not furnished with arguments that he is right. They are arguments eminently satisfactory to himself and such as he thinks should silence those who press the case. For instance, the priest and Levite were both in a hurry. The priest had been away for a month at Jerusalem from his wife and dear childrenhe naturally wanted to get home. If he lingered, the sun might go downit was an awkward place to be after sundown and you could not expect him to be so imprudent as to stay in such a with darkness coming on.

Had he not spent a very laborious month in the temple? You do not know how exhausting he had found it to act as a priest for a whole month! And if you did, you would not blame him for wanting to get home to enjoy a little rest! Besides, he had promised to be home at a certain hour and he was a man of punctualityhe would, by no means, cause anxiety to his wife and children who would be looking from the housetop for him. A very excellent excuse was this! But he also felt that he really could not do much good. He did not understand surgery and could not bind up a wound to save his life! He shrank from itthe very sight of blood turned his stomach! He could not bring himself to go near a person who was so frightfully mangled.

If he did try to bind up a wound, he is sure he would make a muddle of it. If his wife had been with him, she could have done it, or if he had brought some plaster, liniment, or strapping, he would have tried his bestbut as it was, he could do nothing. The poor man, moreover, was evidently half dead and would be quite dead in an hour or two and, therefore, it was a pity to waste time on a hopeless case. Then the priest was only one person and could not be expected to carry a bleeding manand yet it would be idle to begin with the case and leave him there all night. True, He could almost hear the sound of the Levites feetindeed, he hoped he was coming up behind, for he felt very nervous at being alone with such a case. But then that was all the more reason for leaving the matter, since the Levite would be sure to attend to it.

Better still was the following line of excuseyou would not have a person stop in a place where another man had been half killed by thieves! The thieves might be back againthey were scarcely out of hearing, even thenand a priest, after a months service, ought to have some fees in his purse! And it was important not to run the risk of losing the support of his family by stopping in a place which was evidently swarming with highwaymen. He might be wounded, too, and then there would be two people half dead and one of them a valuable clergyman! Really, philanthropy would suggest that you take care of yourself, as you could not possibly do any good to this poor man.

And then the man might die and the person found near the body might be charged with the murder. It is always awkward to be found alone in a dark spot with the corpse of one who has evidently suffered from foul play. The priest might be taken up upon suspiciondid not all the principles of prudence suggest that the very best thing that he could do was to get out of the way as quickly as possible? Moreover, he could pray for the man, you know, and he was glad to find that he had a tract with him which he would leave near himand what with the tract and the prayer, what more could a good man be expected to do?

With this pious reflection he hastened on his way. It is just possible, also, that he did not wish to be defiled. A priest was too holy a person to meddle with wounds and bruises. Who would propose such a thing? He had come from Jerusalem in all the odor of sanctity! He felt himself to be as holy as he could conveniently be and, therefore, he would not expose such rare excellence to worldly influences by touching a sinner. All these

powerful reasons put together made him content to avoid trouble and leave the doing of kindness to others.

Now, this morning, I shall leave you to make all the excuses you like about not helping the poor and aiding the hospitals. And when you have made them, they will be as good as those which I have set before you. You have smiled over what the priest might have said, but if you make any excuses for yourselves whenever real need comes before you and you are able to relieve it, you need not smile over your excusesthe devil will do thatyou had better cry over them, for there is the gravest reason for lamenting that your heart is hard toward your fellow creatures when they are sick and, perhaps, even sick unto death.

III. In the third place THE SAMARITAN IS A MODEL FOR THOSE WHO HELP THE AFFLICTED. He is a model, first, if we notice who the person was that he helped. The parable does not say so, but it implies that the wounded man was a Jew, and, therefore, the Samaritan was not of the same faith and order. The Apostle says, As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. This man was

not of the household of faith, as far as the Samaritans judgment went, but he was one of the all men. The Jew and he were as much apart in religious sympathy as they well could be.

Yes, but he was a manwhether he was a Jew or not, he was a mana wounded, bleeding, dying man. And the Samaritan was another man and so one man felt for another man and came to his aid. Do not ask whether a sick man believes in the 39 Articles, or the Westminster Assemblys Catechism. Let us hope that he is sound in the faith, but if he is not, his bleeding needs stopping just as much as if he held a perfect creed. You need not enquire whether he is a sound Calvinist, for an Arminian smarts when he is wounded, too! A Churchman feels as much pain as a Dissenter when his leg is broken and an infidel needs nursing when he is crushed in an accident. It is as bad for a man to die with a heterodox creed as with the orthodox faith. Indeed, in some respects it is far worse and, therefore, we should be doubly anxious for his cure.

We are to relieve real distress irrespective of creed, as the Samaritan did. Moreover, the Jews were great haters of the Samaritans and, no doubt, this Samaritan might have thought, If I were in that mans case, he would not help me. He would pass me by and say, It is a Samaritan dog, let him be accursed. The Jews were accustomed to curse the Samaritans, but it did not occur to the good man to remember what the Jew would have said. He saw him bleeding and he bound up his wounds. Our Savior has not given us, for a golden rule, Do you to others as others would do to you, but as you would they should do to you. The Samaritan went by that rule and though he knew of the enmity in the Jewish mind, he felt that he must heap coals of fire upon the wounded man by loving helptherefore he went straight away to his relief.

Perhaps at another time the Jew would have put off the Samaritan and refused even to be touched by him, but the tender-hearted sympathizer does not think of that. The poor man is too sick to hold any crotchets or prejudices and when the Samaritan bends over him and pours in the oil and wine, he wins a grateful glance from the son of Abraham. That poor wounded man was one who could not repay him. He had been stripped of all that he had, even his garments were taken from him. But charity does not look for payment, otherwise it were not charity! The man was a total stranger, too. The Samaritan had never seen him before. What did that matter? He was a man and all men are kin. God has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth.

The Samaritan felt that touch of Nature which makes all men kin and he bent over the stranger and relieved his pains. He might have said, Why should I help? He has been rejected by his own peoplethe priest and the Levite have left himhis first claim is upon his own countrymen. So have I known some say, These persons have no claim! They ought to go to their own people. Well, suppose they have gone and failed? Now comes your turn! And what the Jew would not do for the Jew, let the Samaritan do and he shall be blessed in the deed. He had been neglected by the officials and neglected by the saintsthe best, or those who ought to be the best, the priest and the Levitehad deserted him and left him to die. The Samaritan is neither saint nor official, but yet he steps in to do the deed! Oh, Christian Brothers and Sisters, take care that you are not put to shame by this Samaritan!

He is a model to us, next, in the spirit in which he did his work. He did it without asking questions. The man was in need. He was sure of that and he helped him at once. He did so without hesitation and made no compact nor agreement with him, but at once proceeding to pour in the oil and wine. He did it without attempting to shift the labor from himself to others. Charity, nowadays, means that A asks B to help him and B, in his wonderful charity, does him the great favor of sending him on to C. That is to say, the common run of benevolent persons, nowadays, put their hands but seldom into their own purses, but send people on to a few individuals who find cash for all. It seems to me to be a very mean way of getting rid of a case by saving your own pocket and passing the applicant on to another who is no better off than yourself, but far more generous.

The Samaritan was personally benevolent and therein he is a mirror and model to us all. He did it without any selfish fear. The thieves might have been upon him, but he cared nothing for thieves when a life was in danger. Here is a man in need and the man must be relievedthieves or no thievesand so he does it. He does it with self-denial, for he finds oil and wine and money at the innand everything, though he was by no means a rich man, for he gave two pencea larger sum than it looks, but still a small sum. He did not fling his alms about because he was rich. He is not said to have given a handful of pence, but two, for he had to count his pence as he expended them. It was a poor Samaritan who did this rich and noble act!

The poorest can help the pooreven those who feel distress, themselves, may manifest a generous Christian spirit and give their services. Let them do so as they have opportunity. This man helped his poor neighbor with great tenderness and care. He was like a mother to him. Everything was done with loving thought and with whatever skill he possessed. He did the best he could. Brothers and Sisters, let what we do for others always be done in the noblest style! Let us not treat the poor like

dogs to whom we fling a bone, nor visit the sick like superior beings who feel that they are stooping down to inferiors when they enter their rooms. But in the sweet tenderness of real love, learned at Jesus feet, let us imitate this good Samaritan!

And what did he do? Well, first, he came to where the sufferer was and put himself into his position. Then he put forth all his skill for him and bound up his wounds, no doubt tearing his own garments to get the bands with which to bind up the wounds. He poured in oil and wine, the best healing mixture that he knew of, and one which he happened to have with him. He then set the sick man on his mule and, of course, he had to walk, but this he did right cheerfully, supporting his poor patient as the mule proceeded. He took him to an inn, but he did not leave him there and say, Someone else will take care of him now. No, he went to the manager of the establishment, gave him money and said, Take care of him.

I admire that little sentence, because it is first written, He took care of him, and next he said, Take care of him. What you do, yourself, you may exhort other people to do. He said, I leave this poor man with you, pray do not neglect him. There are a great many people in the inn, but take care of him. Is he a brother of yours? No, I never saw him before. Well, are you at all under obligation to him? No!Yes, yes, I feel under obligation to everybody that is a man. If he needs help, I am obliged to help him. Is that all? Yes, but do take care of him. I feel a great interest in him. The Samaritan did not cease till he had gone through with his kindness. He said, This money may not be sufficient, for it may be a long time before he is able to move. That leg may not soon heal. That broken rib may need long rest. Do not hurry him away. Let him stay here and if he incurs additional expense, I will be sure to pay it when I come back from Jerusalem.

There is nothing like the charity which endures even to the end! I wish I had time to enlarge on all these things, but I cannot do so. Exhibit them in your lives and you will best know what they mean. Go and do likewise, each one of you, and thus reproduce the good Samaritan.

IV. But now, fourthly, WE HAVE A HIGHER MODEL than even the Samaritanour Lord Jesus Christ. I do not think that our Divine Lord intended to teach anything about Himself in this parable, except so far as He is the great Exemplar of all goodness. He was answering the question, Who is my neighbor? and He was not preaching about Himself at all. There has been a great deal of straining of this parable to bring the Lord Jesus and everything about Him into it, but this I dare not imitate. Yet by analogy we may illustrate our Lords goodness by it.

This is a picture of a generous-hearted man who cares for the needy. But the most generous-hearted man that ever lived was the Man of Nazareth and none ever cared for sick and suffering souls as He has done. Therefore, if we praise the good Samaritan, we should much more extol the blessed Savior whom His enemies called a Samaritan and who never denied the charge, for what cared He if all the prejudice and scorn of men should vent itself on Him? Now, Brothers and Sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ has done better than the good Samaritan because our case was worse. As I have already said, the wounded man could not blame himself for his sad estateit was his misfortune, not his fault.

But you and I are not only half dead, but altogether dead in trespasses and sins! And we have brought many of our ills upon ourselves. The thieves that have stripped us are our own iniquities! The wounds which we bear have been inflicted by our own suicidal hands! We are not in opposition to Jesus Christ as the poor Jew was to the Samaritan from the mere force of prejudice, but we have been opposed to the blessed Redeemer by naturewe have, from the first, turned away from Him. Alas, we have resisted and rejected Him! The poor man did not ignore his Samaritan friend, but we have done so to our Lord.

How many times have we refused Almighty Love! How often, by unbelief, have we pulled open the wounds which Christ has bound up! We have rejected the oil and wine which in the Gospel He presents to us. We have spoken evil of Him to His face and have lived, even for years, in utter rejection of Him! And yet in His infinite love He has not given us up, but He has brought some of us into His Church where we rest as in an inn, feeding on what His bounty has provided! It was wondrous love which moved the Saviors heart when He found us in all our misery and bent over us to lift us out of it though He knew that we were His enemies!

The Samaritan was akin to the Jew because he was a man, but our Lord Jesus was not originally akin to us by nature. He is God, infinitely above us, and if He were found in fashion as a man it was because He chose to be so. If He journeyed this way, via Bethlehems manger, down to the place of our sin and misery, it was because His infinite compassion brought Him here. The Samaritan came to the wounded one because, in the course of business, he was led there and, being there, he helped the man. But Jesus came to earth on no business but that of saving us and He was found in our flesh that He might have sympathy with us. In the very existence of the Man, Christ Jesus, you see manifested the noblest form of pity!

And being here, where we had fallen among robbers, He did not merely run risks of being attacked by thieves Himself, but He was attacked by themHe was wounded, He was strippedand He was not half dead, but altogether dead, for He was laid in the grave! He was slain for our sakes, for it was not possible for Him to deliver us from the mischief which the thieves of sin had worked upon us except by suffering that mischief in His own Personand He suffered it that He might deliver us. What the Samaritan gave to the poor man was generous, but it is not comparable to what the Lord Jesus has given to us! He gave him wine and oil, but Jesus has given His hearts blood to heal our wounds! He loved us and gave Himself for us.

The Samaritan lent himself with all his care and thoughtfulness, but Christ gave Himself even to the death for us. The Samaritan gave two pence, a large amount out of his slender storeand I do not depreciate the giftbut, He that was rich for our sakes became poor that we, through His poverty might be rich. Oh, the marvelous gifts which Christ has bestowed upon us! Who is he that can reckon them! Heaven is among those blessings, but His own self is the chief gift! The Samaritans compassion did but show itself for a short time. If he had to walk by the side of his mule it would not be for many miles. But Christ walked by the side of us, dismounted from His Glory, all through His life! The Samaritan did not stop long at the inn, for he had his business to attend to and he very rightly went about it.

But our Lord remained with us for a lifetime, even till He rose to Heavenyes, He is with us even nowalways blessing the sons of men. When the Samaritan went away, he said, Whatever you spend more I will repay you. Jesus has gone up to Heaven and He has left behind Him blessed promises of something to be done when He shall come again. He never forgets us! The good Samaritan, I dare say, thought very little of the Jew in later years. Indeed, it is the mark of a generous spirit not to think much of what it has done. He went back to Samaria and minded his business and never told anybody, I helped a poor Jew on the road. Not he.

But of necessity our Lord Jesus acts differently, for because we have a constant need, He continues to care for us and His deed of love is being done, and done, and done again upon multitudes of casesand will always be repeated so long as there are men to be saved, a Hell from which to escape and a Heaven to win! I have thus set before you the highest example and I shall conclude when I have said two things. Judge yourselves, all of you, my Hearers, if you are hoping for salvation by your own works.

Look to what you must be throughout an entire life if your works are to save you. You must love God with all your heart and soul and strength, and your neighbor, in this Samaritans fashion, even as yourself. And both of these without a single failure! Have you done this? Can you hope to do it perfectly? If not, why do you risk your souls in this frail skiffthis leaky, sinking craft of your poor worksfor you will never get to Heaven in it. Lastly, you who are Christs people are saved, already, and you are not going to do these things in order to save yourselves. The greater Samaritan has saved youJesus has redeemed you, brought you into His Church, put you under the care of His ministers, bid us take care of you and promised to reward us if we do so in the day when He comes.

Seek, then, to be true followers of your Lord by practical deeds of kindness and if you have been backward in your gifts to help either the temporal or the spiritual needs of men, begin, from this morning, with generous hearts, and God will bless you. O Divine Spirit, help us all to be like Jesus! Amen.

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GOOD NEWS FOR YOU   
NO. 473

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 5, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. Luke 10:33.**

THE good Samaritan is a masterly picture of true benevolence. The Samaritan had no kinship with the Jew, he was purely of foreign origin, yet he pities his poor neighbor. The Jews cursed the Cuthites and would have no dealings with them, for they were intruders in their land. There was nothing, therefore, in the object of the Samaritans pity that could excite his national sympathies, but everything to arouse his prejudices, hence the grandeur of his benevolence.

It is not my intention, this morning, to indicate the delightful points of excellence which Christ brings out in order to illustrate what true charity will perform. I want you only to notice this one fact, that the benevolence which the Samaritan exhibited towards this poor wounded and half-dead man, was available benevolence. He did not say to him, If you will walk to Jericho, then I will bind up your wounds, pouring in the oil and wine. Or, If you will journey with me as far as Jerusalem, I will then attend to your wants.

Oh, no, he came where he was, and finding that the man could do nothing whatever for his own assistance, the good Samaritan began with him, then and there, upon the spot, putting no impossible conditions to him, proposing no stipulations which the man could not performbut doing everything for the man, and doing it for him as he was, and where he was.

Beloved, we are all quite aware that a charity of which a man cannot avail himself, is no charity at all. Go among the operatives of Lancashire and tell them that there is no necessity for any of them to starve, for on the top of Mount St. Bernard, there are hospitable monks who keep a refectory, where they relieve all passers-by. Tell them they have nothing to do but to journey to the top of the Alps and there they will find food enough. Poor souls! They feel that you mock them, for the distance is too great.

Penetrate one of our back streets, climb up three pair of stairs into a wretched room, so dilapidated that the stars look between the tiles. See a poor young girl dying of consumption and poverty. Tell her, if you dare, If you could get to the seaside, and if you could eat so much beef steak, you would no doubt recover. You are shamefully laughing at hershe cannot get these things. They are beyond her reachshe cannot journey to the seasideshe would die before she reached it. Like the wicked, your tender mercies are cruel.

I have noticed this unavailing charity in hard winters. People give away bread and soup tickets to poor people who are to give sixpence and then receive soup and bread. And often I have had persons come to meSir, I have a ticket. It would be worth a great deal to me, if I had sixpence to go with it to get the relief. But I have not a farthing in all the world, and I cannot make out the good of giving me this ticket at all. This is hardly charity.

Think you see Jeremiah, down in the low dungeonif Ebedmelech and Baruch had stood over the top of the dungeon and called out to him, Jeremiah, if you will get half way up, we will pull you out, when there was not a ladder, nor any means by which he could possibly get so far, how cruel would have been this charity. But, instead thereof, they took old rags from under the kings treasury, and put them on ropes and bade him put the rags under his armholes and sling his arms through the ropes and then they pulled him up all the way. This was available charity. The other would have been hypocritical pretense.

Brethren, if in the description of a good Samaritan, Christ describes him as giving to this poor wounded man a charity of which he could avail himself, does it not seem to be strongly probableno, even certainthat when Christ comes to deal with sinners, He gives them available mercy Divine Grace which may be of real service to them?

Therefore, permit me to say I do not believe in the way in which some people pretend to preach the Gospel. They have no Gospel for sinners as sinners, but only for those who are above the dead level of sinnership and are technically styled sensible sinners. Like the priest in this parable. They see the poor sinner, and they say, He is not conscious of his need, we cannot invite him to Christ. He is dead, they say, it is of no use preaching to dead souls. So they pass by on the other side, keeping close to the elect and quickened, but having nothing whatever to say to the dead, lest they should make out Christ to be too gracious and His mercy to be too free.

The Levite was not in quite such a hurry as the priest. The priest had to preach, and might be too late for the service, and therefore he could not stop to relieve the man. Besides, he might have soiled his cassock, or made himself unclean. And then he would have been hardly fit for the dainty and respectable congregation over which he officiated.

As for the Levite, he had to read the hymns. He was a clerk in the church, and he was somewhat in a hurry, but still he could get in after the opening prayer, so he indulged himself with the luxury of looking on. Just as I have known ministers say, Well, you know we ought to describe the sinners state and warn him, but we must not invite him to Christ. Yes, Gentlemen, you must pass by on the other side, after having looked at him, for on your own confession you have no

good news for the poor wretch.

I bless my Lord and Master, He has given to me a Gospel which I can take to dead sinners, a Gospel which is available for the vilest of the vile. I thank my Master that He does not say to the sinner, Come half way and meet Me, but He comes where he is, and finding him ruined, lost, obdurate, He meets him on his own ground and gives him life and peace without asking, or expecting him to prepare himself for Grace. Here is, I think, set forth in my text, the available benevolence of the Samaritan. It is mine this morning, to show the available Grace of Christ.

I. The sinner is WITHOUT MORAL QUALIFICATION FOR SALVATION but Christ comes where he is.   
I want, if I can, not to talk about this as a matter having to do with the multitude that are abroad, but with us in these pews. I speak not of them and those, but of you and me. I want to say to every sinner, You are in a state in which there is nothing morally that can qualify you for being saved, but Jesus Christ meets you where you now are.  
1. Remember first, that when the Gospel was first sent into the world, those to whom it was sent were manifestly without any moral qualification. Did you ever read the first chapter of Pauls Epistle to the Romans? It is one of those awful passages in Scripture, not intended to be read in congregations, but to be read and studied in the secrecy of ones chamber. The Apostle gives a portrait of the manners and customs of the heathen world, so awful, that unless our missionaries had informed us that it is exactly the photograph of life in Hindustan at the present moment, infidels might have declared that Paul had exaggerated.   
Heathendom in the time of Paul was so desperately wicked that it would be utterly impossible to conceive of a sin into which men had not fallen. And yet, We turn unto the Gentiles, said the Apostle. And the Lord Himself commanded, Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. What? To Sodomites, whose very smallest sin is adultery and fornication? To thieves and murderers, to murderers of fathers and mothers? Yes, go and preach the Gospel to them!   
Manifestly, the fact is that the world was steeped up to its very throat in the filth of abominable wickedness, and yet the Gospel was sent to it. This proves that Christ does not seek for any qualification of morality, or righteousness in man, before the Gospel is available to them. He sends the Word to the drunkard, to the swearer, the harlot, the vilest of the vile. For such is the Gospel of Christ intended to save.   
2. Remember again, the Biblical descriptions of those whom Christ cared to save in the world proves to a demonstration that He comes to the sinner where he is. How does the Bible describe those whom Christ came to save? As men? No, my BrethrenChrist did not come to save men as men, but men as sinners. As sensible sinners?No, I think not. They are described as, dead in trespasses and sins. But to the Law and to the Testimony, let me read you one or two passages. And, while I read them, I hope you may be able to say, There is hope for me.   
First, those whom Christ came to save are described in 1 Timothy 1:15 and many other places, as sinners. 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. Sinners, without any adjective before the word. Not awakened sinners, not repenting sinners. But sinners, as sinners. Surely, says one, I am not shut out. Another account is found in Romans 5:6, For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ diedfor whom? Those who had some desires after God? Some respect to His name?   
No, for the ungodly. Now, an ungodly man means a man without God, who cares not for God. God not in all his thoughts, and therefore he is not what men call a sensible sinner. The ungodly are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Even these are the persons that Christ came to save. In the same chapter, 10th verse, you find them mentioned as enemies. When we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.   
What do you say to this? They are not described as friends. Christ laid down His life for His friends in one senseBut God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Enemies to God were the objects of Divine Grace, so that in enmity Christ comes and meets man where he is.   
In Ephesians 2:1 we read of them as, dead in trespasses and sins. And you have He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. Christ, then, does not ask the sinner to make himself alive. The Gospel is not only to be preached to those who have some good notions, some good desires, some trembling of the heavenly life within, but to the dead as dead. To the dead does Christ comes, and meets them in the grave of their sin.   
Again, Ephesians 2:3they are children of wrath. We were by nature the children of wrath even as others. Yet the Gospel came to such. Can you see anything hopeful in a child of wrath? I ask you to look over him from head to footif this is his name and charactercan you see a spot of goodness as large as a pins point in the man? And yet such Christ came to save.   
Once again, they are mentioned as accursed. Ah, says one sinner, I have often cursed myself before God, and asked Him to curse me. Well, Christ died for the accursed, Galatians 3:13, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us. That is, for us who were under the curse. And, once more, they are described by the dreadful word lost. They are lost to all hope, to all consideration for themselves. Even their own friends have given their case up as hopeless.   
The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). If I understand those passages which I have read in your hearing, they mean just thisthat those whom Christ came to save have no good whatever in them to co-operate towards their salvation. And Christ does not look upon them in order to find anything that is good in them. I am bold to say the only fitness for cleansing is filthiness. The only fitness for a Savior is being lost. And the only character under which we come to Jesus is as sinners, lost, dead and accursed.  
3. But, thirdly, it is quite certain from the work of Divine Grace itself, that the Lord does not expect the sinner to do anything or to be anything in order to meet him, but that He comes to him where he is. Look, Sinner, Christ dies on Calvary, a weight of sin is on His shoulders, and on his heart. In agonies the most awful, He shrieks under the desertion of His God.   
For whom did He die? For the innocent? Why for the innocent? What sacrifice did they need? For those who had some good thing in them? Why all these agonies for such? Surely a less price might do for them if they could eke it out themselves. But because Christ died on account of sin, I take it that those whom He died for must be viewed as sinners and only as such. Inasmuch as He paid a dreadful price, I gather that they must be dreadfully in debt, and that He died for those who had nothing to pay with.   
But Christ rose again, rose again for our justification. For whose justification? For the justification of those who were justified in themselves? Why, this were to perform an unnecessary work! No, my Brethren, for those who had no justification of their own, not a shadow of any, who were condemned, utterly condemned on account of their own works. Moreover, I hear Him by the ear of faith pleading before the eternal Throne. Who does He plead for? For those who have something to plead on their own account?that were needless.   
Do men give their money to the rich? Do they spend their charity on those who do not need it? If men have something to plead for themselves, then why does Christ plead for them? No, Brethren, He pleads for those who have nothing whatever, that they can bring as an argument with which to enforce their prayers. But Christ ascended and received gifts. Who for? For those who merited rewards? No, verily, let them get them for themselves. But He received gifts for menyes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.   
But he gives the Holy Spirit. To whom does He give the Holy Spirit? To those that are strong, and good, and can do all themselves? O, my Brethren, no! He gives the Holy Spirit to those that are powerless, weak, dead. He gives the Holy Worker to those who are all unholy and full of sin. He puts the Omnipotent Influence into those who were slaves to the spirit of evil. Brethren, the work of Christ supposes a lost, ruined, rebellious sinnerand so I sayChrist meets the man where he is.   
4. Yet more, for I would clear up this point before I leave it, the godlike character of the Grace of God proves that He meets the sinner where he is. If God forgives little sinners only, then He is little in His mercy. If the Lord does not do something more than men can think, then we have made too much noise about the Gospel, and have exalted the Cross above measure. Unless there is something extraordinary in Divine Grace, then I cannot understand such a passage as this, As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are My ways above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts.   
I venture to say, Brethren, that many of us have thought of forgiving our enemies. It has sometimes been our happy portion to do good to them that hate us. Now, if God would be godlike in His Graceand I am sure He willHe must do something more than that. He must not only forgive His enemies but they must be enemies of such an atrocious character that no man would have forgiven them   
*Who is a pardoning God like You,   
Or who has Grace so rich and free?*

But where is the meaning of this boast, if the Lord merely pardons sinners who are sensible of their sins and lament them? The marvel is in thisthat while they are yet enemies He calls them by His Grace and invites them to mercy. Yes, more, He blots out their sins and makes them friendsthus meeting the sinner where he is.

5. The spirit and genius of the Gospel utterly forbid the supposition that God requires anything in any man in order to save him.   
If salvation is offered to man upon a condition, they who fulfill the condition have a claim to the blessing. This is the old Covenant of Works. The substance of the legal Covenant is, Do this and I will reward you. When the man has done it, he deserves what has been promised. Yes, and if you make the condition ever so easy, yet, mark you, so long as it is a condition, God is bound by His own Word, the condition being fulfilled, to give man what he has earned. This is works and not Divine Grace.   
It is debt and not free favor. But, inasmuch as the Gospel is free favor from beginning to end, I am absolutely sure that God requires nothing neither good wishes, good desires, nor good feelings of a sinnerbefore he may come to Christ. But that he may know that everything is of Grace, the rebel is commanded to come just as he is, bringing nothing, but taking everything from God, who is superabundant in mercy, and therefore meets the sinner just where he is.   
I say to the sinner, wherever you may be today, if you are without any virtue, and if you are filled with all vice. If there are no good points in your character. If there is everything that is bad against man and against God in you. If you have committed every crime in the catalog, if you have ruined your body, and damned your soul, yet still Christ has said itHim that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out. And if you come to Him, He can no more cast you out than if you had been the most virtuous, the most honorable, and the most devout of all living men.   
Only today believe in the mercy of God, in Christ, and cast yourself on Him and you are saved to the praise and glory of that Divine Grace which meets you just where you are, and saves you from sin.   
II. In the second place, there are very many of the lost race of Adam who say that they are WITHOUT ANY MENTAL QUALIFICATION. This is their excuseBut, Sir, I never was a scholar. I was sent out as a boy to earn my own living, so that I never had a weeks schooling. I am so ignorant that I cannot read any book and if anybody were to ask me to make a prayer I could not, I have not sense enough.   
Now, you see the Lord Jesus meets you just where you are. And how does He do this? Why, first, the saving act is one that requires no mental power. Faith lays hold on eternal life. Now, a child whose faculties are ever so little developed can believe what it is told. The child cannot reason, cannot argue, cannot dispute, cannot spilt hairs, cannot see a knotty point in theology, but it can believe what it is told. Faith requires so little mental vigor or intellectual clearness, that there have been many who were idiots in other things, who have been made wise unto salvation by the act of faith in Christ.   
You remember our Lords own words, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. But this never could have happened had not the act which brings us into communion with Christ been the lowest act of the human facultythat of simply trusting to Christas the result of crediting that which is told us upon good testimony.   
But then, again, to meet this defect of mental power, remember the singular simplicity of that which is believed. Is there anything more simple in the world than the doctrine of the Atonement. We deserve to die, Christ dies for us. We are in debt, Christ pays for us. Is not this plain enough for a Ragged School child? It is so plain, that many of our learned doctors of Divinity try to take it out of the Bible. They think, If this is the marrow of it all, then any fool can be a theologian. So they kick against it.   
What is Unitarianism but a stumbling at the simplicity of the Cross. There were Unitarians who stood at the Cross when Christ died. they said, Let Him come down from the Cross and we will believe on Him. That has been the Unitarian character ever since. They will receive Jesus anywhere but on His Cross. But up there, dying in mans place, he is so commonplace, that these great gentlemen run to philosophy and vain deceit sooner than lay hold on that which the most common may as fully understand as they.   
Yet more. To meet any mental deficiency in man, while the Truth of God itself is simple, it is taught in the Bible under such simple metaphors, that none can say they cannot understand it. How simple is the metaphor of the brazen serpent, held up before the snake-bitten Israelites, while they are commanded to look and live? Who does not understand that a look at Christ, who dies in the place of men, will make them live? If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. Who does not understand the figure of a fountain flowing in the streets, that every thirsty passerby may put his lips down and drink?   
Behold the Lamb of God. Who does not understand the sacrifice? Here is a lamb killed for the sin of Israel, and so Christ dies for the sin of those who believe in Him. The act of faith is simple, the object of faith is plain. The metaphors make it clear, and he is without excuse who does not understand the Gospel of Christ.   
To crown all, to you, my Beloved Hearers, Christ has given you abundance of teachers. There sits in your pew with you today a man of your own rank and calling, who will explain to you the Gospel, if you do not understand it. Here are many of us, who are but too glad if we can roll away the stone from the door of your sepulcher. Here are children of God themselves, saved by Sovereign Grace, and if you really do not know the way, do but touch your neighbor and say to him, Can you explain to me yet more clearly what I must do to be saved?   
Now, this is meeting you, let your brains be the very smallest. This is coming down to you, though you sit on the lowest step of human intellect. Jesus Christ meets you just where you are.   
III. But yet again. I think I hear another say, I am in despair, for I CANNOT FIND ANY REASON IN MYSELF, OR OUT OF MYSELF, WHY GOD SHOULD FORGIVE SUCH A PERSON AS I AM.   
So then, you are in a hopeless stateat least you see no hope. The Lord meets you where you are, by putting the reason of your salvation altogether in Himself. Shall I remind you of one or two texts which will surely satisfy you? I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions. What for? For My own sake. He cannot pardon you for your sake, you clearly see that. And you feel that He cannot pardon you for other peoples sake. But for My own sake, says He, that I may glorify Myself. Not in you but in His own mighty breast He finds the motive, that He may make His own mercy illustrious. For His own sake He will do it.   
Or take anotherFor My names sake, even for My names sake, will I defer My anger, that I cut you not off. Here it is againfor His names sake, as if He knew He could not find any motive, so He puts it all on Himself. He pardons, that He may honor and glorify His own name. Sinner, you can not say that this does not meet your casefor if you are the most hellish good-for-nothing sinner that ever cursed Gods earth, and polluted the air you breathe, yet He can save you, for His own sake. There is still room for you to hope. For the bigger the sinner you are, the more glory to Him if He saves you. And if salvation is given for a reason only in Himself, there is, therefore, a reason by which He can save you, even you.   
Remember that He puts His own design before your eyes to show you that if you have no reason in yourself, that is no hindrance to His saving you. What is Gods design in saving men? When He brings them to Heaven, what will be the result of it? Why, that they may love and praise His name forever and sing, Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory. You are just the man. If you are ever saved and brought to Heaven, oh, will you not praise His Grace?   
Yes, said one old man who had long lived in sin, if He ever does bring me to Heaven, He shall never hear the last of it, for I will praise Him throughout eternity. Why, do you not see that you are the man? You are the very man that will answer Gods design, for who shall love so much as he who has had much forgiven? And who shall praise so loudly as he whose mighty sins have been overcome by the mighty love, and goodness, and Grace of God? You can not say that it does not meet you, for here is a motive and a reasonthough you can find none in yourself.   
Here is another reason why God should save youit is His own Word, the Word of Him that cannot lie. I will bring up that text again, perhaps there is a heart here that will be able to cast anchor on itHim that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out. You say, But if I come, I can see no reason why He should save me. I answer, there is a reason in His own promise. God cannot lie. You come. He will not cast you out. He says, I will in no wise cast out. But, you say, He may for such-and-such a reason.   
Now, this is a flat contradiction. The two cannot stand. If there is anything that is necessary in order for a soul to come, and you come without it, yet there is the promiseand as it has no limit in it, plead itand the Lord will not refuse to honor His own Word. If He can cast you out because you have not some necessary qualification, then His Word is not true. Whoever you may be, whatever you may not be, and whatever you may be, if you believe in Jesus Christ, there is a reason in every attribute of God why you should be saved.   
His Truth cries, Save him, for You have said I will. His power says, Save him, lest the enemy deny Your might. Gods wisdom pleads, Save him, lest men doubt Your judgment. His love says, Save him. His every attribute says, Save him. And even Justice, with its hoarse voice, cries, Save him, for God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, if we confess our sins.  
I am trying to fish in deep waters after some of you that have long escaped the net. I know when I have given free and full invitations, you have said, Ah, that cannot mean me. You are without faith in Christ, because you think you are not fit. I will be clear of your blood this morning. I will show you that there is no fitness wanted, that you are

commanded now to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as you are, for Jesus Christs Gospel is an available Gospel, and comes to you just where you are. Without moral or mental qualification, and without any sort of reason why He should save you, He meets you as such and bids you trust Him.  
IV. We proceed to our fourth point. Oh, says one, but I am WITHOUT COURAGE. I dare not believe on Christ. I am such a timid, trembling soul, that when I hear that others trust Christ, I think it must be presumption. I wish I could do the same, but I cannot, I am kept under by such a sense of sin, that I dare not. O Sir, I dare not, it would look as if I were flying in the face of Justice if I were to dare to trust Christ and then to rejoice in the pardon of my sin.   
Very well, Christ comes to meet you where you are, by very tender invitations. Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money, come you, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that hears say, come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.   
How sweetly He puts it to you. I do not know where more wooing words could be found, than those the Savior uses. Will you not come when Christ beckons, when with His loving face streaming with tears, He bids you come to Him? What? Is an invitation from Him too little a thing for you? O Sinner, trembling though you are, say in your soul *Ill to the gracious King approach,   
Whose scepter pardon gives;   
Perhaps He may command my touch,   
And then the suppliant lives.*   
Knowing that you would neglect the invitation, He has put it to you in the light of a command. This is the commandment, that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned. He thought you would say, Ah, but I am not fit to accept the invitation. Well, says He, I will command the man to do it.   
Like a poor hungry man with bread before him, who says, Ah, it would be presumption on my part to eat, but the king says, Eat, Sir, or I will punish you. What a generous and liberal command! Even the threat itself has no anger in it. Like the mother, who, when the child is near to die, and nothing will save it but the medicine, and the child will not drink, she threatens the child, but only out of love to it that it may be saved. So the Lord does add threats to commands. For sometimes a black word will drive a soul to Christ where a bright word would not draw it. Fears of Hell sometimes make men flee to Jesus. The weary wing made the poor dove fly to the arkand the thunderbolts of Gods justice are only meant to make you fly to Christ the Lord.   
Beloved, once more, my Master has sweetly met your want of courage by bringing many others, so that you may follow their example. As fowlers sometimes have their decoys, so my Master has decoys that are to draw others to Him. Other sinners have been saved, others He has cleansed who did but trust Him. There was Lot. Ah, Lot! Guilty of drunkenness and incest, and yet a saint of God. David the adulterer and murderer of Uriah and yet washed whiter than snow.   
Manasseh the bloody persecutor, who had cut Isaiah in two, sawing him in halves, and yet he was taken among the thorns, and God had mercy on him. What shall I say of Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of Gods people? And the robber dying on the Cross for his crimes, and yet saved? Sinner, if these do not induce you to come, what can overcome your sinful diffidence? But, says one, you have not hit my case yet. I am an outrageous sinner!   
Well now, I will hit it this time. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, hear the Word of the Lord, Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.   
Why, Brethren, what horrible descriptions there are here! There are some of them so bad that when we have read the description, we wish to forget the sin. And yetand yet, glory be to Your Almighty Grace, O God!such have You saved and such You save still. O, timid Sinner, can you not trust in Jesus after this?   
Hear the Word of the Lord again in Titus 3:3-5For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving many lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.   
Now, you hateful sinners, and you that hate others. You that are full of malice and envy, here is the gate open, even for you, for the kindness and love of God towards man appears in the Person of Christ. Listen to another, for Gods Words are more than mine, and I do hope they will attract some of you. In Ephesians 2:1-3Dead in trespasses and sins. Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.   
But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by Grace you are saved), and has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. What for? That in the ages to comemark thisHe might show the exceeding riches of His Grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.   
One more passage and I will not weary your attention. O that this last passage might comfort some of you! It is Paul who speaks in 1 Timothy 1:13, I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the Grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying. See how he puts it from his own experience, and worthy of all acceptation. And therefore worthy of yours, poor sinner, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.   
Ah says one but he would not save any more. Let me go on Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.   
So that if you trust as Paul did, you shall be saved as Paul was, for his conversion and salvation are a pattern to all those who should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, unto life everlasting. So Sinner, timid as you are, here Jesus meets you. O, I wish I could say a word that would lead you poor tearful ones to look to Jesus! O, do not let the devil tempt you to believe that you are too sinful. He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him   
*Let not conscience make you linger,   
Nor of fitness fondly dream.*   
Fitness is not neededdo but come to Him. You are black in sin, and you do not feel your blackness as you oughtthat makes you all the blacker. Come, then, and be clean. You are sinful, and this is your greatest sin, that you do not repent as you ought. But come to Him and ask Him to forgive your impenitence. Come as you areif He rejects one of you, I will bear the blame forever. If He casts one of you away that shall trust Him, call me a false prophet in the day of the resurrection. But I pawn my life upon itI stake my own souls interest on thisthat whosoever comes unto Him, He will in no wise cast out.   
V. I hear one more complaint. I am WITHOUT STRENGTH, says one, will Jesus come just where I am? Yes, Sinner, just where you are. You, you say, cannot believe, that is your difficulty. God meets you, then, in your inability. First, He meets you with His promises. Soul, you can not believe. But when God, that cannot lie, promises, will you not believe, can you not believe, then? I think Gods promiseso sure, so steadfastmust overcome this inability of yours, Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out. Cannot you believe now? Why, that promise must be true!   
But next, as if He knew that this would not be enough, He has taken an oath with itand a more awful oath was never swornAs I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live. Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel. Can you not believe now? What? Will you doubt God when He swears it? Not only make God a liar butlet me shudder when I say itwill you think that God can perjure His own Self?   
God forbid you should so blaspheme! Remember, He that believes not has made God a liar, because He believes not on the Son of God. Do not do this! Surely you can believe when the promise and the oath compel you to faith. But yet more, as if He knew that even this were not enough, He has given you of His Spirit. If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? Surely with this you can believe.   
But, says one, I will try. No, no, do not try. That is not what God commands you to dono trying is wanted. Believe Christ now, Sinner. But, says one, I will think of it. Do not think of it. Do it now, do it at once for this is Gods Gospel. There are some of you standing in these aisles, and sitting in these pews, who I feel in my soul will never have another invitation. And if this is rejected today, I feel a solemn motion in my soulI think it is of the Holy Spiritthat you will never hear another faithful sermon, but you shall go down to Hell impenitent, unsaved, unless you trust in Jesus

NOW.   
I speak not as a man but I speak as Gods ambassador to your souls, and I command you, in Gods name, trust Jesus, trust Him now. At your peril reject the voice that speaks from Heaven, for he that believes not shall be damned. How shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation? When it comes right home to you, when it thrusts itself in your way, oh, if you will neglect it, how can you escape? With tears I would invite you, and, if I could, would compel you to come in. Why will you not?  
O Souls, if you will be damned, if you make up your mind that no mercy shall ever woo you, and no warnings shall ever move you, then, Sirs, what chains of vengeance must you feel that slight these bonds of love? You have deserved the deepest Hell, for you slight the joys above. God save you. He will save you, if you trust in Jesus. God help you to trust Him even now, for Jesus sake. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #927 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

MARTHA AND MARY   
NO. 927

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, APRIL 24, 1870, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus feet, and heard His Word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha,   
you are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary has chosen that good part,**

**which shall not be taken away from her.   
Luke 10:38-42.**

IT is not an easy thing to maintain the balance of our spiritual life. No man can be spiritually healthy who does not meditate and commune. No man, on the other hand, is as he should be unless he is active and diligent in holy service. David sweetly sang, He makes me to lie down in green pastures. There was the contemplative. He leads me beside the still waters. There was the active and progressive. The difficulty is to maintain the twoand to keep each in its relative proportion to the other. We must not be so active as to neglect communion, nor so contemplative as to become unpractical.

In the chapter from which our text is taken we have several lessons on this subject. The seventy disciples returned from their preaching tour flushed with the joy of success. And our Savior, to refine that joy and prevent its degenerating into pride, bids them rather rejoice that their names were written in Heaven. He conducted their contemplations to the glorious doctrine of election, that grateful thoughts might sober them after successful work. He bids them consider themselves as debtors to Divine Grace, which reveals unto babes the mysteries of Godfor He would not allow their new position as workers to make them forget that they were the chosen of Godand therefore debtors.

Our wise Master next returns to the subject of service, and instructs them by the memorable parable of the good Samaritan and the wounded man. And then as if they might vainly imagine philanthropy, as it is the service of Christ, to be the only service of Christ, and to be the only thing worth living for, He brings in the two sisters of Bethany. The Holy Spirit meant thereby to teach us that while we ought to abound in service, and to do good abundantly to our fellow men, yet we must not fail in worship, in spiritual reverence, in meek discipleship, and quiet contemplation. While we are practical, like the seventypractical like the Samaritan practical like Martha, we are, also, like the Savior, to rejoice in spirit, and say, Father, I thank You, and we are also like Mary, to sit down in quietude and nourish our souls with Divine Truth.

This short narrative, I suppose, might be paraphrased something after this fashion. Martha and Mary were two most excellent sisters, both converted, both lovers of Jesus, both loved by Jesus, for we are expressly told that He loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus. They were both women of a choice spiritour saviors selection of their house as a frequent resort proved that they were an unusually gracious family. They are persons representative of different forms of excellence, and I think it altogether wrong to treat Martha as some have done, as if she had no love for good things, and was nothing better than a mere worldling. It was not so.

Martha was a most estimable and earnest woman, a true Believer, and an ardent follower of Jesus whose joy it was to entertain Jesus at the house of which she was the mistress. When our Lord made His appearance on this occasion at Bethany, the first thought of Martha was, Here is our most noble guest, we must prepare for Him a sumptuous entertainment. Perhaps she marked our Saviors weariness, or saw some traces of that exhaustion which made Him look so much older than He was. And she, therefore, set to work with the utmost diligence to prepare a feast for Him.

She was careful about many things, and as she went on with her preparations, fresh matters occurred to ruffle her mind, and she became worried. And, being somewhat vexed that her sister took matters so coolly, she begged the Master to upbraid her. Now Mary had looked upon the occasion from another point of view. As soon as she saw Jesus come into the house she thought, What a privilege have I now to listen eagerly to such a Teacher, and to treasure up His precious words! He is the Son of God, I will worship, I will adore, and every word He utters shall be stored in my memory.

She forgot the needs both of the Master and His followers, for her faith saw the inner Glory which dwelt within Him. She was so overpowered with reverence, and so wrapt in devout wonder, that she became oblivious of all outward things. She had no faults to find with Martha for being so busy. She did not even think of Marthashe was altogether taken up with her Lord and with those gracious words which He was speaking. She had no will, either, to censure or to praise or to think even of herself. Everything was gone from her but her Lord and the word which He was uttering.

See, then, that Martha was serving Christ, but so was Mary. Martha meant to honor Christ, so did Mary. They both agreed in their design, but they differed in their way of carrying it out. And while Marthas service is not censured (only her being cumbered comes under the censure), yet Mary is expressly commended, as having chosen the good part. And therefore we do Martha no injustice if we show wherein she came short, and wherein Mary exceeded.

Our first observation will be thisthe Martha spirit is very prevalent in the Church of God just now. In the second place, the Martha spirit very much injures true service. In the third place, the Mary spirit is the source of the noble form of consecration.

I. THE MARTHA SPIRIT IS VERY PREVALENT IN THE CHURCH at this periodprevalent in some quarters to a mischievous degreeand among us all to a perilous extent. What do we intend by saying that the Martha spirit is prevalent just now? We mean, first, that there is a considerable tendency among Christian people, in serving Christ, to aim at making a fair show in the flesh. Martha wanted to give our Lord right worthy entertainment which should be a credit to her house and to her familyand herein she is commendable far above those careless ones who think anything good enough for Christ.

So also, among professing Christians, there is at this present time a desire to give to the cause of Christ buildings notable for their architecture and beauty. We must have no more barns. Our meeting houses must exhibit our improving taste. If possible, our chapels must be correctly Gothic or sternly classical in all their details, both without and within. As to the service, we must cultivate the musical and the tasteful. We are exhorted not to be barely decent, but to aim at the sublime and beautiful. Our public worship, it is thought, should be impressive if not imposing. Care should be taken that the music should be chaste, the singing conformed to the best rules of the arts, and the preaching eloquent and attractive.

So everything in connection with Christian labor should be made to appear generous and noble. By all means the subscription lists must be kept current. Each denomination must excel the other in the amount of its annual fundssurely everything done for Christ ought to be done in the best possible style. Now in all this there is much that is good, much that is really intended to honor the Lord, so we see no room to censurebut yet we will show you a more excellent way. These things you may do, but there are higher things which you must do, or suffer loss.

Brethren, there is something better to be studied than the outward, for though this may be aimed at with a single eye to Gods Gloryand we judge no manyet we fear the tendency is to imagine that mere externals are precious in the Masters sight. I know He counts it a very small matter whether your House of Prayer is a cathedral or a barn. To the Savior it is small concern whether you have organs or whether you have none whether you sing after the choicest rules of psalmody or not. He looks at your hearts, and if these ascend to Him. He accepts the praise. As for those thousands of pounds annually contributed, He estimates them not by the weights of the merchant, but after the balances of the sanctuary.

Your love expressed in your gifts He values, but what are the mere silver and gold to Him? Funds, and encouraging accounts, and wellarranged machineries are well if they exist as the outgrowth of fervent lovebut if they are the end-all, and the be-allyou miss the mark. Jesus would be better pleased with a grain of love than a heap of ostentatious service. The Martha spirit shows itself in the censuring of those persons who are careful about Christs Word, who stand up for the doctrines of the Gospel, who desire to maintain the Ordinances as they were delivered unto them, and who are scrupulous and thoughtful, and careful concerning the Truth as it is in Jesus.

In newspapers, on platforms, and in common talk, you frequently hear earnest disciples of Jesus and consistent Believers in His doctrines snubbed and denounced as unpractical. Theological questions are scouted as mere impertinences. Go in for Ragged schools, certainly. Reclaim the Arabs of the street, by all manner of means. Pass a compulsory education bill, certainly. Soup kitchens, free dinnersall excellent. We can all join in these. But never mention creeds and doctrines. Why, Man, you cannot be aware of the enlightenment of our times! What importance can now be attached to mere biblical dogmas and ordinances? Why contend as to whether Baptism shall be performed upon a babe or upon a Believer, whether it shall be by sprinkling or by immersion? What matters the Law of Christ in such a case?

These things would do for the schoolmen of the Dark Ages to fight about, but what can be the importance of such trifles in this highly enlightened nineteenth century? Yes, that is the exaggeration of Martha. Mary, treasuring up every word of Christ, Mary counting each syllable a pearl, is reckoned to be unpractical, if not altogether idle. That spirit, I fear, is growing in these times, and needs to be checked. After all, there is Truth and there is error, and charitable talk cannot alter the fact. To know and to love the Gospel is no mean thing. Obedience to Jesus, and anxiety to learn His will so as to please Him in all things are not secondary matters.

Contemplation, worship, and growth in Grace are not unimportant. I trust we shall not give way to the spirit which despises our Lords teaching, for if we doin prizing the fruit and despising the rootwe shall lose the fruit and the root, too. In forgetting the great well-spring of holy activity, namely, personal piety, we shall miss the streams, also. From the sincerity of faith and the fervor of love practical Christianity must arise. And if the food that faith and love feed upon is withdrawn. If sitting at the feet of Jesus is regarded as of secondary consequence, then both strength and will to serve the Lord will decline.

I dread much the spirit which would tamper with the Truth of God for the sake of united action, or for any object under Heaventhe latitudinarian spirit, which sneers at creeds and dogmas. Truth is no trifle. Our fathers did not think so, when, at the stake they gave themselves to death, or on the brown heather of Scotland fell beneath the swords of Claverhouses dragoons for truths which nowadays men count unimportant, but which, being truths, were to them so vital that they would sooner die than suffer them to be dishonored. O for the same uncompromising love of the Truth! Would to God we could be both active and studious, and both learn with Mary and work with Martha!

The Martha spirit crops up in our reckoning so many things necessary. Martha believed that to entertain Christ there must be many things prepared. As to leaving one of those things outit could not be. Our Lord would have been satisfied enough with the simplest farea piece of fish or of a honeycomb would well have contented Him. But no, according to Marthas judgment there must be this, and there must be that. So is it with many good people now. They have their ideas of excellence, and if these cannot be realized they despair of doing anything acceptable for Christ.

I believe an educated ministry to be desirable, but none the less do I deplore the spirit which considers it to be essential. In the presence of the fishermen of Galilee we dare not subscribe to the necessity which with some is beyond doubt. You must not, according to the talk of some, allow these earnest young people to set about preaching, and your converted coal miners and fiddlers should be stopped at once. The Holy Spirit has in all ages worked by men of His own choosing. But some Churches today would not let Him if they could help it. Their pulpits are closed against the most holy and useful preachers if they have not those many things with which the Church nowadays cumbers her ministers and herself.

Then, my Brethren, to carry on a good work it is thought needful to have a Society and large funds. I also approve of the Society and the funds. I only regret that they should be so viewed as prime necessaries that few will stir without them. The idea of sending out a missionary with a few pounds in his hands as in the days of Carey, is set down in many quarters as absurd. How can you save souls without a committee? How can London be evangelized till you have raised at least a million of money? Can you hope to see men converted without an annual meeting in Exeter Hall? You must have a secretarythere is no moving an inch till he is elected.

And know you not that without a committee you can do nothing? All these and a thousand things, which time fails me to mention, are now deemed to be necessary for the service of Jesus. It is such that a truehearted soul who could do much for his Lord scarcely dares to move till he has put on Pauls armor of human patronage. O for Apostolic simplicity, going everywhere preaching the Word, and consecrating the labor of every Believer to soul-winning. To bring us back to first principles, one thing is needful, and if by sitting at Jesus feet we can find that one thing, it will stand us in better place than all the thousand things which custom now demands.

To catch the Spirit of Christ, to be filled with Himselfthis will equip us for godly labor as nothing else can. May all Christians yet come to put this one thing first and foremost, and count the power of deep piety to be the one essential qualification for holy work. The censurable quality in the Martha spirit appears in the satisfaction which many feel with more activity. To have done so much preaching, or so much Sunday school teaching. To have distributed so many tracts, to have made so many calls by our missionariesall this seems to be looked at as end rather than means. If there is so much effort put forth, so much work is doneis it not enough?

Our reply is, it is not enough. It is nothing without the Divine blessing. Brethren, where mere work is prized, and the inner life forgotten, prayer comes to be at a discount. The committee is attended, but the Prayer Meeting forsaken. The gathering together for supplication is counted little compared with the collecting of subscriptions. The opening prayer at public meetings is regarded as a very proper thing. But there are those who regard it as a mere formality, which might be very well laid aside, and, therefore, invariably come in after prayer is over. It will be an evil day for us when we trust in the willing and the running, and practically attempt

to do without the Holy Spirit.

This lofty estimate of mere activity for its own sake throws the acceptance of our work into the shade. The Martha spirit says, if the work is done, is not that all? The Mary spirit asks whether Jesus is well-pleased or not. All must be done in His name and by His Spirit, or nothing is done. Restless service, which sits not at His feet, is but the clattering of a mill which turns without, grinding corn. It is but an elaborate method of doing nothing. I do not want less activityhow earnestly do I press you to it almost every Sunday. But I do pray that we may feel that all our strength lies in God and that we can only be strong as we are accepted of Christ. And we can only be accepted in Christ as we wait upon Him in prayer, trust Him, and live upon Him.

You may compass sea and land to make your proselytes, but if you have not the Spirit of Christ you are none of His. You may rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows, but unless you trust in the Lord your God, you shall not prosper. The joy of the Lord is your strength. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. Without Christ you can do nothing. Has He not told you, He that abides in Me, and I in Him, the same brings forth much fruit? Was it not written of old, I am like a green fir tree: from Me is your fruit found?

Once more, Marthas spirit is predominant in the Church of God to a considerable extent, now, in the evident respect which is paid to the manifestand the small regard which is given to the secret. All regenerated persons ought to be workers for God and with Godbut let the working never swamp the believingnever let the servant be more prominent than the Son! Never, because you conduct a class, or are chief man at a village station, forget that you are a sinner saved by Grace and have need, still, to be looking to the Crucified, and finding all your life in Him. You lose your strength as a worker if you forget your dependence as a Believer.

To labor for Christ is a pleasant thing, but beware of doing it mechanically. And this you can only prevent by diligently cultivating personal communion with Christ. My Brother, it may be you will undertake so much service that your time will be occupied and you will have no space for prayer and reading the Word. The half-hour in the morning for prayer will be cut short, and the time allotted for communion with God in the evening will be gradually entrenched upon by this engagement and the other occupationand when this is the case I tremble for you. You are killing the steed by spurring it and denying it food. You are undermining your house by drawing out the stones from the foundation to pile them at the top.

You are doing your soul serious mischief if you put the whole of your strength into that part of your life which is visible to men, and forget that portion of your life which is secret between you and your God. To gather up all in one, I fear there is a great deal among us of religious activity of a very inferior sort. It concerns itself with the external of service. It worries itself with merely human efforts and it attempts, in its own strength, to achieve Divine results. The real working which God will accept is that which goes hand in hand with a patient waiting upon Christwith heart searching, with supplication, with communionwith a childlike dependence upon Jesus. With a firm adhesion to His Truth, with an intense love to His Person, and an abiding in Him at all seasons. May we have more of such things! Marthas spirit, though excellent in itself, so far as it goes, must not overshadow Marys quiet, deep-seated piety, or evil will come of it.

II. Secondly, we observe that THE MARTHA SPIRIT INJURES TRUE SERVICE. Service may be true, and yet somewhat marred upon the wheel. Give your attention not so much to what I say, as to the bearing of it upon yourselves. It may be that you will find, as we speak, that you have been verily guilty touching these things. The Martha spirit brings the least welcome offering to Christ. It is welcome, but it is the least welcome.

Our Lord Jesus, when on earth, was more satisfied by conversing to a poor Samaritan woman than He would have been by the best meat and drink. In carrying on His spiritual work He had meat to eat that His disciples knew not of. Evermore His spiritual Nature was predominant over His physical Nature, and those persons who brought Him spiritual gifts brought Him the gifts which He preferred. Here, then, was Marthas dish of well-cooked meat, but there was Marys gift of a humble obedient heart. Here was Martha decking the table, but there was Mary submitting her judgment to the Lord, and looking up with wondering eyes as she heard His matchless speech.

Mary was bringing to Jesus the better offering. With Martha, He would, in His condescension, be pleased. But in Mary He found satisfaction. Marthas service He accepted benevolently, but Marys worship He accepted with complacency. Now, Brothers and Sisters, all that you can give to Christ in any shape or form will not be so dear to Him as the offering of your fervent love, the clinging of your humble faith, the reverence of your adoring souls. Do not, I pray you, neglect the spiritual for the sake of the external, or else you will be throwing away gold to gather iron to yourself. You will be pulling down the palaces of marble that you may build for yourselves hovels of clay.

Marthas spirit has this mischief about it, also, that it brings self too much to remembrance. We would not severely judge Martha, but we conceive that in some measure she aimed at making the service a credit to herself as the mistress of the house. At any rate, self came up when she began to grow weary, and complained that she was left to serve alone. We also want our work to show well as our work. We like those who see it to commend it, and if none commend it, we feel that we are treated badly, and are left to work alone. Now, to the extent in which I think of myself in my service I spoil it. Self must sink, and Christ be All in All. John the Baptists saying must be our motto, He must increase, I must decrease. For Jesus shoelace we are not worthy to unloose. Too much work and too little fellowship will always bring self into prominence. Self must be prayed down, and fellowship with Jesus must keep it down.

Martha seemed to fancy that what she was doing was necessary for Christ. She was cumbered about much serving because she thought it necessary that there should be a noble entertainment for the Lord. We are still too apt to think that Jesus wants our work, and that He cannot do without us. The preacher enquires what would become of the Church if

he were removed! The deacon is suspicions that if he were taken away there would be a great gap left in the leadership of the Church. The teacher of a class feels that those children would never be converted, Christ would miss of the travail of His soul but for him.

Ah, but a fly on St. Pauls Cathedral might as well imagine that all the traffic at his feet was regulated by his presence, and would cease, should he be removed. I love you to think that Christ will do much work by you, and to attach as much weight as you can to your responsibilities, but as to Jesus needing usthe thing is preposterous! Mary is much wiser when she feels, He desires me to receive His words, and yield Him my love. I would gladly give Him meat, but He will see to that. He is the Master of all things, and can do without me or Martha. I need Him far more than He can need me.

We spoil our service when we overestimate its importance, for this leads us into loftiness and pride. Martha, under the influence of this high temper, came to complain of her sister, and to complain of her Lord, too, as if He were excusing her idleness. Do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? How it spoils what we do for Christ when we go about it with a haughty spirit! When we feel, I can do this, and it is grand to do thatam I not somewhat better than others? Must not my Master think well of me? The humble worker wins the day. God accepts the man who feels his nothingness, and out of the depths cries to Him.

But the great ones He will put down from their seat, and send the rich ones away empty. Activity, if not balanced by devotion, tends to puff us up and so to prevent acceptance with God. Martha also fell into an unbelieving vexation. Her idea of what was necessary to be done was so great that she found she could not attain to it. There must be this side dish, and there must be that principal meat. There must be this meat and that wine, it must be cooked just so many minutes. This must be done to a turn, and so on, and so on, and so on, and so on.

And now time flies and she fears yonder guest has been slighted. That servant is not back from the market. Many things go wrong when you are most anxious to have them right. You good housewives who may have had large parties to prepare for, know what these cares mean, I dare say. And something of the sort troubled Martha so that she became fretful and unbelieving. She had a work to do beyond her strength, as she thought, and her faith failed her, and her unbelief went petulantly to complain to her Lord. Have we never erred in the same way? We must have that Sunday school excellently conducted, that morning Prayer Meeting must be improved, that Bible class must be revived, our morning sermon must be a telling one, and so on!

The preacher here speaks of himself, for he sometimes feels that there is too much responsibility laid upon his shoulders, and he is very apt in reviewing his great field of labor to grow desponding in spirit. But when the preacher confessed that he spoke of himself, he only did so because he represents his fellow workers, and you also grow faint and doubtful. Alas, in such a case the enjoyment of service evaporates, the fretfulness which pines over details spoils the whole, and the worker becomes a mere drudge and scullion instead of an angel who does Gods commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word.

Instead of glowing and burning like seraphs, our chariot wheels are taken off by our anxiety, and we drag heavily. Faith it is that secures acceptance, but when unbelief comes in, the work falls flat to the ground. At such times when the man or the Church shall become subject to the Martha spirit, the voluntary principle falls a little into disrepute. I believe the voluntary principle is the worst thing in all the world to work where there is no Divine Grace. But where there is Grace it is the one principle that God accepts.

Now, Martha would have Mary made to serve Christ. What right has she to be sitting down there? Whether she likes it or not, she must get up and wait like her sister. Marthas voluntary desire to do much leads her to think that Mary, if she has not quite such a voluntary love for the work, must be driven to itmust have a sharp word from Christ about it. So it is with us. We are so willing to contribute to the Lords work that we wish we had ten thousand times as much to give. Our heart is warm within us, and we feel we would make no reserveand then are so grieved with others because they give so very little that we wish we could compel them to give!

And so we would put their cankered money into the same treasury with the bright freewill offerings of the saints, as if the Lord would receive such beggarly pittances squeezed out by force in the same manner as He accepts the voluntary gifts of His people! It were wiser if we left those unwilling contributions to rust in the pockets of their owners. For in the long run I believe they do not help the causeonly that which is given out of a generous spirit, and out of love to Christwill come up accepted before Him. Too readily do we get away from the free spirit when we get away from the right spirit. The fact is, the Martha spirit spoils all, because it gets us away from the inner soul of service, as I have said before, to the mere husks of service.

We cease to do work as to the Lord, we labor too much for the services sake. The main thing in our minds is the service, and not the Master. We are cumbered, and He is forgotten. Thus have I indicated as briefly as I could, some of the weaknesses of the Martha spirit.

III. Now for THE MARY SPIRIT. I have to show you that it is capable of producing the noble form of consecration to Christ. Its noble results will not come just yet. Marthas fruits ripen very quickly, Marys take time. When Lazarus was dead, you will remember Martha ran to meet Christ, but Mary sat still in the house. Martha wanted her own time, Mary could take Christs time. So after awhile, just before our Lords death, we find that Mary did a grand thingshe did what Martha never thought of doingshe brought forth a box of precious ointment and poured it on the Lords head, and anointed Him with ointment.

While she was sitting at Christs feet, she was forming and filling the springs of action. You are not losing time while you are feeding the soul. While by contemplation you are getting purpose strengthened and motive purified, you are rightly using time. When the man becomes intense, when he gets within him principles vital, fervent, energeticthen when the season for work comes he will work with a power and a result which

empty people can never attainhowever busy they may be. If the stream flows at once, as soon as ever there is a shower, it must be little better than a trickling rivulet. But if the current stream is dammed up, so that for awhile nothing pours down the river bed, you will, in due time, when the waters have gathered strength, witness a torrent before which nothing can stand.

Mary was filling up the fountain head. She was listening and learning, feeding, edifying, loving, and growing strong. The engine of her soul was getting its steam ready, and when all was right, her action was prompt and forcible. Meanwhile, the manner of her action was being refined. Marthas actions were good, but, if I may use the word, they were commonplace. She must make a great feed for the Lord Jesus, just as for any earthly friend. The spiritual nature of Christ she had forgotten, she was providing nothing for it. But Marys estimate of Christ was of a truer order. She looked at Him as a Priest. She viewed Him as a Prophet. She adored Him as a King.

She had heard Him speak about dying, and had listened to His testimony about suffering, and dimly guessing what it meant, she prepared the precious spikenard that before the dying should come she might anoint Him. The womans deed was full of meaning and of instruction. It was, indeed, an embodied poem. The odor that filled the house was the perfume of love and elevated thought. She became refined in her actions by the process of musing and learning. Those who think not, who meditate not, who commune not with Christ, will do commonplace things very well. But they will never rise to the majesty of a spiritual conception, or carry out a heart-suggested work for Christ.

That sitting of Mary was also creating originality of art. I tried, two Sundays ago, to enforce upon you the duty of originality of service as the right thingthat as we wandered, everyone in his own way, we should each serve God in his own way, according to our peculiar adaptation and circumstances. Now this blessed woman did so. Martha is in a hurry to be doing somethingshe does what any other admirer of Jesus would do she prepares meat and a festival. But Mary does what but one or two besides herself would think ofshe anoints Himand is honored in the deed.

She struck out a spark of light from herself as her own thought, and she cherished that spark till it became a flaming act. I would that in the Church of God we had many Sisters at Jesus feet who at last would start up under an inspiration and say, I have thought of something that will bring glory to God which the Church has not heard of before. And this will I put in practice, that there may be a fresh gem in my Redeemers crown. This sitting at the Masters feet guaranteed the real spirituality of what she did. Did you notice when I read what the Master said concerning the pouring of the ointment upon Him, She has kept this for My burial?

He praised her for keeping it, as well as for giving it. I suppose that for months she had set apart that particular ointment, and held it in reserve. Much of the sweetest aroma of a holy work lies in its being thought over and brought out with deliberation. There are works to be done at once and straightway. But there are some other works to be weighed and considered. What shall I do to praise my Savior? There is a cherished scheme, there is a plan, the details of which shall be prayed out, and every single part of it sculptured in the imagination and realized in the heart. And then the soul shall wait, delighting herself in prospect of the deed, until the dear purpose may be translated into fact.

It is well to wait, expectantly saying, Yes, the set time will come. I shall be able to do the deed. I shall not go down to my grave altogether without having been serviceable. It is not yet the time, it is not yet the appropriate season, and I am not quite ready for it myself. But I will add Grace to Grace and virtue to virtue, and I will add self-denial to self-denial, till I am fit to accomplish the one chosen work. So the Savior praised Mary that she had kept thiskept it till the fit moment came before His burial. And then, but not till then, she had poured out and revealed her love. Yes, it is not your thoughtless service, performed while your souls are half asleep it is that which you do for Christ with eyes that overflowwith hearts that swell with emotion. It is this that Jesus accepts.

May we have more of such service, as we shall have if we have more of sitting at His feet. Christ accepted her. He said she had chosen the good part which should not be taken from her. And if our work is spiritual, intense, fervent, thoughtful. If it springs out of fellowship. If it is the outgushing of deep principles, of inward beliefs, of solemn gratitudethen our piety shall never be taken from usit will be an enduring thing. It will not be like the mere activities of Marthathings that come and go.

I have thus worked out my text. I shall utter but two or three words upon the general applications of it. I shall apply it to three or four things very briefly. Brethren, I believe in our Nonconformity. I believe if ever England wanted Nonconformists it is now. But there is a tendency to make Nonconformity become a thing of externals, dealing with State and Church and politics. The political relations of NonconformistsI believe in their valueI would not have a man less earnest upon them. But I am always fearful lest we should forget that Nonconformity is nothing if it is not spiritualand that the moment we, as Dissenters, become merely political or formalit is all over with us.

Our strength is at the Masters feet, and I am afraid for our Nonconformity if it lives elsewhere. I mark so much conformity to the world, so much laxity of rule, so much love of novel opinions, that I tremble. I wish we could go back to Puritanism. We are getting too lax. There is too much worldliness and carnality among us. There is little fear of our being censured, even by the world, for being too Particular. I am afraid we are too much like the world for the world to hate us. As I pray that Nonconformity may always prevail in England, so I earnestly pray that she may stand because she abides near to Christ, holds His Truth, prizes His Word, and lives upon Himself.

Now the like is true of missions. Apply the principle there. God bless missions. Our prayer goes up for them as warmly as for our souls salvation. But the strength of missions must lie not so much in arrangements, in committees, in money, in menas in waiting upon the Christ of God. We shall not do any more with a hundred thousand pounds than with a single thousand, unless we get more Divine Grace. We shall not have

more souls won with fifty missionaries than with five, unless we get ten times the amount of power from the right hand of the Most High. The waking up in missions needs to begin in our Prayer Meetings, and in our Churches. In our personal wrestling with God for the conversion of the heathen must lie the main strength of the workers that go out to do the deed. Let us remember thisMary shall yet pour the box of ointment upon the head of the AnointedMartha cannot do it.

The same thing is true in revivals. Persons will talk about getting up a revivalof all things I do believe one of the most detestable of transactions. If you want a revival of religion, it is said, you, must get Mr. Soand-So to preachwith him I suppose is the residue of the Spirit. Oh, but if you want a revival, you must adopt the methods so long in vogue, and so well known as connected with such-and-such a revival! I suppose the Spirit of God is no more a free Spirit, then, as He used to be in the olden times. And whereas of old He breathed where He wished, you fancy your methods and plans can control Him. It is not so. It is not so in any degree.

The way to get the revival is to begin at the Masters feet! You must go there with Mary and afterwards you may work with Martha. When every Christians heart is acting right by feeding on Christs Word and drinking in Christs Spirit, then will the revival come. When we had the long drought, some farmers watered their grass, but found it did but very little good. An Irish gentleman remarked in my hearing that he had always noticed that when it rained there were clouds about, and so all the air was in right order for the descent of rain.

We have noticed the same, and it so happens that the clouds and general constitution of the atmosphere have much to do with the value of moisture for the herbs. It is no good watering them in the sun, the circumstances do not benefit them. So with revivals. Certain things done under certain circumstances become abundantly useful, but if you have not similar circumstances, you may use the same machinery, but mischief instead of good will follow. Begin yourself with the Master, and then go outward to His service, but plans of action must be secondary.

So too, lastly, if you want to serve God, as I trust you do, I charge you first be careful of your own souls. Do not begin with learning how to preach, or how to teach, or how to do this and that. Dear Friend, get the strength within your own soul, and then even if you do not know how to use it scientifically, yet you will do much. The first thing is to get the heart warmed! Stir up your manhood! Brace up all your faculties! Get the Christ within youask the everlasting God to come upon you! Get Him to inspire youand then if your methods should not be according to the methods of others it will not matter. Or if they should, neither will it be of consequence,

Having the Power of the Holy Spirit, you will accomplish the results. But if you go about to perform the work before you have the strength from on High, you shall utterly fail. Better things we hope of you. God send them. Amen.

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LOVE AT LEISURE   
NO. 2927

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 1905.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 3, 1876.

**Mary,** who also **sat at Jesus feet, and heard His Word. Luke 10:39.**

MARY was full of a love to Christ which could be very active and selfsacrificing. I have read to you of her pouring the precious box of spikenard upon our Lord for His anointing. She was, therefore, one who not only waited and listened, but she served the Lord after her sort and fashion. If she had been simply contemplative and nothing more, we might, perhaps, have considered her somewhat of a one-sided characterand while pointing to that which was good in her as an example, we might have had to comment on her deficiencies. But she did more than sit at the Masters feet. Beloved, if we ever serve the Lord as Mary did, we shall do well.

Now, since she was able thus to serve, she becomes a safe example for us in this other matter of restful faith. The portion of her life occupied in sitting at her Masters feet may instruct and help us. I feel I can safely hold her up to you as an example in all respects and the more so because of the particular incident just now before us where she received the Masters express commendation. He also praised her for bringing the box of ointment but, on this occasion, He praised her, too, saying that she had chosen the good part which should not be taken from her. He could not have more conspicuously set His seal of approval on her conduct than He did. I am not going to say much about her, but I want to speak to those of you who love the Lord as Mary did, to try if I cannot entice you for your own rest and for your own encouragement into following her example in this particular incident, namely, that of sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have already said you can see that the example is only part of her lifeone side of it. At another time I may take the other side and exhort you to also follow her in that, but for this next hour or so, I want you to leave out the other side of her character and stick only to this. Consider it well, for I am persuaded that this is the true preparation for the otherthat contemplation and rest at the Saviors feet will give you strength which will enable you afterwards to anoint His feet according as your hearts love shall dictate.

On this occasion, then, we have only to do with Mary sitting at our Saviors feet. There shall be four heads which you will not forgetlove at leisure sitting down. Love in lowliness, sitting at Jesus feet. Love listeningshe heard His Words. Love learningshe heard His Words to a most blessed purpose. All the while she chose the good part.

I. First, then, LOVE AT LEISURE. That is a point which I want you especially to notice. You that have families to feed and clothe know how, all day long, you are busyvery busy, perhaps. The husband is away from early morning till the evening comes. The children have gone to school and the wife is occupied in a hundred household things. But now the evening meal is over and there is a warm fire burning in the hearth. Is it not one of the most pleasant sights of English interiors to see the family gathered around the fire to just sit still for a little while to talk and to indulge in those domestic loves which are the charm of that sweet English word, home? May an Englishman never ceases to think of the word, home, as the most musical word that ever dropped from mortal lips! Now love is quiet and still and, I was about to say, careless. Outside it has to watch its words, but inside it is playful, it is at ease, it disports itself, fearless of all adversaries. It takes its rest. The armor is put off and the soldier feels the days battle is done. He stands not on his guard any longer. He is among those that love him and he feels that he is free. I do not know what life would be if there were not some of those sweet leisure moments when love has nothing else to do except to lovethose intervals, these oases in the desert of life wherein to love is to be happy and to be loved is to be doubly blest!

Now, Christian people ought to have such times. Let us put aside our service for awhile. I am afraid that even those who are busy in the Masters work and are not occupied much with lower things, yet overlook the necessity for love to be at leisure. Now tonight, at any rate, you that work longest and toil most and have to think the hardest can ask the Lord to make this a leisure time between you and Jesus. You are not called upon to help Martha to prepare the banquet. Just sit stillsit still and rest at Jesus feet and let nothing else occupy the next hour but sitting still and loving and being loved by Him.

Can we not get rid of worldly cares? We have had enough of them during the six dayslet us cast the whole burden of them upon our Lord. Let us roll them up and leave them all at the Throne of Grace. They will keep till tomorrow and there is no doubt whatever that they will plague us enough, then, unless we have faith enough to master them. But now put them on the shelf. Say, I have nothing to do with you nowany one of you. You may just be quiet. My soul has gone away from you up to the Saviors bosom, there to rest and to delight herself in Him.

And then let us try to banish all church cares also. Holy cares should not always trouble us. As I came here just now, I said to myself, I will try tonight not to think about how I shall preach, or how this part of the sermon may suit one class of my Hearers or that part another. I will just be like Lazarus was, of whom it is written that, Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. You know that the preacher to such a congregation as this may often find himself like Martha, combined with much serving if he forgets that he is but a servant of the Master and has only to do His bidding. You may well excuse us. But it must not be so tonight. Whether you are deacon or elder, or preacher, or hearer, you must have nothing to do tonight with anything outside of our blessed Lord and our own hearts! Our love shall claim this time for her own rest. No, Martha, even though you are getting ready to feast Christ, we will not hear the clatter of dishes or the preparation of the festival. We must now just sit there at His feet and look up, and have no eyes except for Him, no ears except for Him, no heart except for Him. It shall be loves leisure night tonight!

And, in truth, Beloved, we have plenty of reason for resting. Let us sit at Jesus feet because our salvation is complete. He said, it is finished, and He knew that He had worked it all. The ransom price is paid for you, O my Soul! Not one drop has been withheld of the blood that is your purchase. The robe of righteousness is woven from top to bottomthere is not one thread for you to add. It is written, You are complete in Him and however frail we are, yet we are perfect in Christ Jesus, and in spite of all our sin, we are accepted in the Beloved. If it is so, O Love, have you not room for leisure? Is not this thought a sofa upon which you may stretch yourself and find that there is space enough for you to take your fullest ease? Your rest is not like the peace of the ungodly of whom it is said, The bed is shorter than that a man may stretch himself upon it. Here is perfect rest for youa couch long enough and broad enough for all your need! And if, perhaps, you should remember, O my Heart, that you have sin yet to overcome and corruption within you yet to combat, remember this night that Christ has put away all your sin, for He is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes and that He has overcome the world on your behalf and said to you, Be of good cheer. You have to fight, but your foe is a routed foe! It is a brokenheaded dragon that you have to go to battle with and the victory is sure, for your Savior has pledged Himself to it! You may well take your leisure, for the past is blotted out and the future is secure! You are a member of Christs body and as such you cannot die! You are a sheep of His pasture and as such He will never lose you! You are a jewel of His crown and as such He will never take His eyes or His heart off of you! Surely, then, you may take your leisure.

Let us also rest because we have received so much from our Master . Be sure to remember, O heart that would have leisure for love, that though you have many mercies to receive, there are not as many to come as you have already had! You have great things yet to learn, but not such great things as you have already been taught. He that has found Christ Jesus to be his Savior has found more than he will ever again find, even though he finds a Heaven, since even Heaven itself is in the loins of Christ and he that gets Jesus has got an eternity of bliss in him! If God gave you Christ, all else is small compared with the gift you already have. Take your leisure, then, and rejoice in your Lord, Himself, and in His Infinite perfections.

As to the Lords work, we may well take leisure for love, because it is His work. It will go on rightly enough. It is His work, the saving of those souls. It is well that we are so eagerit were better if we were more eager. But just now we may lay even our eagerness aside, for it is not ours to saveit is Hisand He will do it. He will soon give you to see of the travail of His soul. Christ will not die in vain. Elections decree shall not be frustrated and Redemptions purpose shall not be turned aside. Therefore rest.

Besides, my Heart, what can you do, after all? You are so little and so altogether insignificant. If you worry yourself into your grave what can you accomplish? God did well enough before you were born and He will do well enough when you are gone Home. Therefore fret not yourself. I have sometimes heard of ministers that have been quite exhausted by the preparation of a single Sunday sermon. I am told, indeed, that one sermon on a Sunday is as much as any man can possibly prepare! It is such laborious work to elaborate a sermon! And then I say to myself, Did my Lord and Master require His servants to preach such sermons as that? Is it not probable that they would do a great deal more good if they never tried to do any such fine things, but just talked out of their hearts of the simplest Truths of His blessed Gospel!

I turn to the Old Testament and I find that He told His priests to wear white linen, but He also told them never to wear anything that caused sweat, from which I gather that He did not want His priests in the Temple to be puffing and blowing and sweating and boiling like a set of Negro slaves. He meant that His service, although they threw their strength into it, should never be wearisome to them! He is not a taskmaster, like Pharaoh, exacting his tale of bricks and then again a double tale, giving his servants no straw wherewith to make them. No, but He says, Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Therefore it seems to me that with all the work His people doand they ought to do it so as to pour their whole life on His head like a box of precious spikenard, yet He did not mean them to go up and down about His service, stewing and worrying and killing their very lives out of them about this and that and the other!

They will do His service a great deal better if they will very often come and sit down at His feet and say, Now I have nothing to do but to love Himnothing to do but to receive His love into my soul. Oh, if you will seek after such quiet communion you will be sure to work with a holy might that shall consume you! First take in the strength by having these blessed times of leisure at the Saviors feet. He that believes shall not make haste. He shall have such peace and restfulness, such quiet and calm, that he shall be in no hurry of fear or fright, but he shall be like the great Eternal who, with all that He doesand He works up to now and guides the whole universe which is full of stupendous wondersyet never breaks the eternal leisure in which His supreme mind forever dwells!

Well, if we cannot keep up such leisure as that, at least let us have it tonight. I invite you, persuade you and entreat you, Beloved Mary and others like you, to do nothing but just enjoy the leisure of love and sit at Jesus feet.

II. The second thing is LOVE IN ITS LOWLINESS. Love needs to spend her time with Christ. She picks her place and her place is down at His feet. She does not come to sit at the table with Him, like Lazarus, but she sits down on the ground at His feet.

Observe that love in this case does not take the position of honor. She is not a busy housewife, managing affairs, but a lowly worshipper who can only love. Some of us have to be managers for Christmanaging this and managing thatbut perhaps love is most at home when she forgets that she has anything to manage. She leaves it to manage itself, or better still, she trusts the Lord to manage it all and just subsides from a manager into a disciple, from a worker into a penitent, from a giver into a receiver, from a somebody, which Grace has made her, to a nobody, glad to be nothing, content to be at His feet, to let Him be everything, while self sinks and sinks away. Do not let me only talk about this, Beloved, but let it be done! Love your Lord now. Let your hearts remember Him. Behold His robes of love, all crimsoned with His hearts blood. You shall take your choice whether you look up to Him on the Cross, or on the Throne. Let it be as suits your mind best tonight, but in any case say unto Him, Lord, what am I, and what is my fathers house, that You have loved me so?

Sit near your Lord, but sit at His feet . Let such words as these be upon your lips, Lord, I am not worthy to be called by Your Grace. I am not worthy to be written in Your Book of Life. I am not worthy that You should waste a thought on me, much less that You should shed Your blood for me. I remember now what I was when You did first deal with me. I was cold, careless and hard towards You, but very wanton and eager towards the world, giving my heart away to a thousand lovers and seeking comfort everywhere except in You. And when You did come to me, I did not receive You. When You did knock at my door, I did not open to You, though Your head was wet with dew and Your locks with the drops of the night. And, oh, since through Your Grace I have admitted You and You and I have been joined together in bonds of blessed union, yet how ill have I treated You! O my Lord! How little have I done for You! How little have I loved You! I could faint in Your Presence to think that if You did examine me and question me, I could not answer You one of a thousand questions You might ask me. Your book accuses me of negligence in reading it. Your Throne of Grace accuses me of slackness in prayer. The assemblies of Your people accuse me that I have not been hearty in worshipping. There is nothing, either in Providence or in Nature, or in Grace, but what might bring some accusation against me! The world itself might blame me that my example so little rebukes it and my very family might charge that I do not bless my household as I should. That is right, dear Brother, dear Sister. Sink! Go on sinking. Be little. Be less. Be less still. Be still less. Be least of all. Be nothing!

Lift up your eyes from your lowly place to Him who merits all your praise. Say to Him, But what are You, Beloved, that You should have thought of me before the earth was? That You should take me to Yourself to be Yours and then for me, should leave the royalties of Heaven for the poverties of earth and should even go down to the grave, that You might lift me up and make me to sit with You at Your right hand? Oh, what wonders You have worked in me and I am not worthy of the least of Your mercies! And yet You have given me great and unspeakable blessings. If You had only let me be a doorkeeper in Your house, I had been happy, but You have set me among princes! If You had given me the crumbs from Your table, as dogs are fed, I had been satisfied, but You have put me among the children! If You had said that I might just stand outside the gates of Heaven now and then, on gala days, to hear Your voice, it would have been bliss for me! But now You have promised me that I shall be with You where You are, to behold Your Glory and to be a partake of it, world without end. Do not such thoughts as these make you sink? I do not know how it is with you, but the more I think of the Lords mercies, the more I grow downward. I could weep to think that He should lavish so much on one that gives Him no return at all, for so it seems to my heart that it is with me. What do you think of yourself? What is your faith, your love, your liberality, your prayers, your works? Dare you call them anything? Do you imagine that the Lord is pleased with your past? Would He not rather say to you, You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled me with the fat of your sacrifices; but you have made Me to serve with your sins and wearied Me with your iniquities. So we sit down again at His feet and from that place we would not wish to rise. Loves leisure shall be spent in acts of humiliation. We will bow at the feet that were pierced for our redemption!

III. But now, in the third place, here is LOVE LISTENING. She is down there in the place of humility, but she is where she can catch each word as it falls, and she is there with one purpose. She wishes to hear all that Christ has to say and she wishes to hear it close at hand. She wants to hear the very tones in which He speaks and the accents with which He delivers each precept. She loves to look up and see those eyes which have such meaning in them and that blessed Countenance which speaks as much as the lips themselves. And so she sits there and she looks with her eyes toward Him as a handmaids eyes are to her mistress. And then, with her ears and her eyes, she drinks in what He has to say.

Now, Beloved, I want you to do that. Say in prayer now, Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears. And then with your ears open, hear what He says by His Word. Perhaps there is some text that has come home to your soul today. Hear it. Hear it well. It would not be much use for anyone to try to preach a sermon in the center of the city in the middle of the day. If you stood near St. Pauls Cathedral with all that traffic going by and all that rumbling, roaring and shouting, why, the big bell, itself, might speak and you would hardly hear it! But when it is night and all is still, then you can hear the city clocks strike and you might hear a mans voice even though it was not a very strong one, if he went through the streets and delivered a message with which he had been entrusted. Well, our blessed Lord often takes advantage of those quiet times when the man has a broken leg and cannot get to work, but must be still in the hospital. Or when the woman is unable to get about the house to attend to her ordinary duties, but is so helpless that she cannot do anything else but think. Then comes the Lord and He begins to bring to our remembrance what we have done in days pastand to talk with us as He never has the opportunity of doing at any other time. But it is far more blessed to find time ourselves, so that the Lord will not need to afflict us in order to get us quickly at His feet! Oftentimes the Good Shepherd, in caring for the sheep, makes us lie down, but He is glad when we come of our own accord that we may rest and listen to His Word.

Listen to what He is saying to you by Providence. Perhaps a dear child is sick at home, or you have losses and crosses in business. It may not seem to you as if these things come from your loving Lord, but they are perhaps the pressure of His hand to draw you to His side that He may tell you His secret. Perhaps it has been mercy that has come to you in another way. You have been prospered, you have been converted, you have had much joy in your family. Well, the Lord has a voice in all that He does to His people, so listen tonight. If you listen you will be obliged to say, What shall I render to the Lord for His benefits to me?

Listen also to what the Spirit says in your soul . Listen, for it is not till you get your soul quiet that you can hear what the Spirit of God is saying. I have known such a clatter of worldliness or pride, or some other noise in the soul of man, that the still small voice of the Holy Spirit has been drowned to the serious detriment of the disciple. Now, I hope you have really done with all your cares and left them outside the Tabernacle tonight, that even the cares about your class in the Sunday school and about your preaching engagement tomorrow, and everything else, have been put aside and that now you are just sitting down at Jesus feet and listening. While you listen in that fashion, in lowly spirit at His feet, you are likely to hear Him say some words to you which, perhaps, may change the whole tenor of your life! I do not know what God the Lord will speak, but, He will speak peace to His people. Sometimes He speaks in such a way that a turbid life has become clear. A life of perplexity has become decided and distinctly happy. And a life of weakness has become a career of strengths. And a life that seemed wasted for a while has suddenly sprung up into eminent usefulness! Keep your ears open, Mary! Keep your ears open, Brother, and you will hear what Jesus Christ has to say!

But now let me say, while you are sitting and listening, you will do well to listen as much to Him as to what He has to say, for Christ Himself is the Word and His whole life is a voice! Oh, sit down, sit down and listen! I wish I had not to talk tonight and could sit down and do it for myself and just look up at Him, God over all, blessed forever, and yet Brother to my soul, a partaker of flesh and blood! This very fact, that He is Incarnate, speaks to me! That God is in human flesh speaks comfort to my soul, such as no words could ever convey! God in my nature! God become my Brother, my Helper, my Head, my All! Could not my soul leap out of the body for joy at the Incarnation if there were nothing else but that revealed to us?

Now let me look up again and see my Lord with His wounds, as Mary did not see Him, but as we now maywith hands and feet pierced, with scarred side and marred visagetokens of the ransom price paid in His pangs and griefs and death. Is it not amazing to see your sin forever blotted out and blotted out so fully, and blotted out by such means as this? Why, if there were not an audible word, those wounds are mouths which speak His love! The most eloquent mouths that ever spoke are the wounds of Christ. Listen! Listen! Every drop of blood says, Peace. Every wound says, Pardon. Life. Eternal life.

And now see your Beloved once again. He is risen from the dead and His wounds bleed no more! Yes, He has gone into Glory and He sits at the right hand of God, even of the Father! It is well for you, dear Brother or Sister, that you cannot literally sit at His feet in that guise, for if you could only see Him as He is, I know what would happen to youeven that which happened to John when he saw Him with His head and His hair white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes as a flame of fire, and His feet as if they burned in a furnace. You would swoon away! John says, When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.

You cannot sit at those feet of Glory till you have left this mortal clay, or until it has been made like unto His glorious body! But you may in faith do soand what will His Glory say to you? It will say, This is what you shall receive. This is what you shall share. This is what you shall see forever and ever. He will say to youeven to you who mourn your insignificance and in lowliness sit at His feetBeloved, you shall partake of the Glory which the Father gave Me, even that which I had with Him before the world was. Soon, when a few more moons have waxed and waned, soon you shall be with Me where I am.

Oh, what bliss is this! Never mind Marthas frowns! Forget her for the moment and keep on sitting at Jesus feet! She may come in and grumble and say that something is neglectedtell her she should not neglect it then, but now your business is not with plates or pots, but to do as your Master has permitted you to do, namely, to sit at His feet and listen to Him!

IV. So I close by saying, in the fourth place, that here is LOVE LEARNING. While she listened she was being taught, because she sat at Jesus feet with her heart all warmsitting in the posture of lowliness she was, as few could hear themhearing words so as to spy out their secret meaning. You know the difference between a mans voice at a distance, saying something, and his being very near you. You know how much the face can say, the eyes can say and the lips can sayand there is many a deaf man that has heard another speak though he has never heard a soundhe has known the meaning by the very movement of the lips and the gleams of the countenance. Ah, and if you get into such near fellowship with Christ as to sit at His feet, you will get His meaning! When the letter kills others, you will see the secret meaning that is hidden within and you will rejoice.

She got at His meaning and then she was hearing the words so as to drink in the meaning. They sit down at Your feet, says the old Scripture, everyone shall receive of Your words. Beloved, that is a great promise to receive of His Words. Some people hear the words but do not receive thembut there sat Mary where, as the words fell, they dropped upon her as snowflakes drop into the sea and are absorbed! So each word of Jesus dropped into her soul and became part and parcel of her nature they fired and filled her very being!

What she learned she remembered. We see love learning what she will treasure up. Mary never forgot what she heard that day. It remained with her forever. It seasoned her whole life. The words of her Master were with her all the days she was watching. All the days she was waiting, she was waiting after they had been spoken. They kept her watching and waiting till, at last, loves instinct told her that the time was come and then she went upstairs where she had put away the choice ointment for which she spent her money. She had laid it up and kept it till the time should comeand just before the Saviors death and burial she fetched it down, the gift which she had hoarded up for Himand she poured it out in adoration.

As she sat at His feet, she resolved to love Him more and more. Love was learning to love better. As she had listened and learned, the learning had crystallized itself into resolves to be, among women, the most devoted to Him. Perhaps, little by little, she had laid aside this great price which she had paid for the spikenard. Be it as it may, it was dear to her, and she brought it down when the time was come and put it all on Him with a joyous liberality and love. Well, now, I want you to learn of Jesus after that fashion and, by-and-by, when the time comes, you, too, may do some deed for Christ that shall fill the house in which you dwell with sweet perfume. Yes, shall fill the earth with it, so that if man scents it not, yet God Himself shall be delighted with the fragrance you pour, out of love, upon His Son!

We are going to have Communion. Here are the emblems of His blessed body and blood and I hope they will help us to have nothing to do but to think of Himnothing to do but to be lowly in His Presence nothing to do but to listen to His words and to drink in His teaching.

But there are some here that do not love Him. It may be that God will lay you low by affliction in order to bring you to the feet of Jesus. Perhaps He will allow disaster and disappointment to overtake you in the world, to win you to Himself. If any of you have had this experience, or are passing through it just now, do not trifle with it, I pray you, for, while we are in this life, if the Lord comes to us to remind us of our sin, He does it in the greatness of His mercy and in order that He may bring salvation to us! It will be quite another thing, in the next life, if you die unrepentant and unforgiven. Then you may, indeed, dread the coming of God to bring your sin to remembrance! But while you are here, if the Lord is so speaking to you, incline your ears and listen to His voice, however harshly it may seem to sound in your ears. Even if He should strip you, be glad to be stripped by Him. If He should wound you, and bruise you, willingly give yourself up to be wounded and bruised by Him. Yes, even if He should slay you, rejoice to be slain by Him, for remember that He clothes those whom He strips, He heals those whom He wounds and He makes alive those whom He kills! So it is a blessed thing to undergo all those terrible operations of Law-work at the hands of the Most High, for it is in that way that He comes to those whom He means to bless.

I cannot preach to you, for the time has gone, but do you know, I think one of the most dreadful things that can ever be said of man is that he does not love Christ. I should be sorry to enter on my list of friends the man that did not love his motherno, I could not call him a man. Dead is that heart to every noble sentiment that loves not her that bore him! And yet there might be some justifiable cause to excuse even that. But not to love the Christ, the God that stooped to bleed for manthis is inexcusable! I dare not tonight utter, as my own, what Paul said, but, very pointedly and solemnly, I would remind you who love not Christ of it. Paul says, If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema Maranathacursed at the coming. Sometimes when I think of my Lord and my heart grows hot with admiration of His self-denying love, I think I could almost invoke the imprecation on the head of him that does not, would not, could not love the Christ of God! But better than that I will ask His blessing for you and so I say, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!

Here our sermon closes. And may Gods blessing rest on it. EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 63; LUKE 10:38-42; JOHN 12:1-8.**

I will read the 63rd Psalm first, as somewhat representing the state of heart into which I would we could all come tonight.   
Psalm 63:1. O God, You are my God. Read that sentence how you will, it is unspeakably precious. If we say, O God, You are my God, it brings out the possession which the Believer has in God. If we say, O God, You are my God, it shows the greatness of the possession which we thus have in having this God to be our God forever and ever. And if we say O God, You are my God, it leads us to think of God and not of His gifts as our chief good.   
1, 2. Early will I seek You: my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see Your power and Your glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary. Long after the old times over againfor those times of Heaven upon earththose special seasons when the Lord made the veil between us and Heaven to be very thin, indeed, and allowed us almost to see His face. To see Your power and Your glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary. Well, then, let us go to the sanctuary again, or make the place where we are a sanctuary. Even the stony pillar may mark the site of Bethel and every spot may be hallowed ground.   
3-5. Because Your loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus will I bless You while I live: I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. Satisfaction, absolute satisfaction! Satiety of every desire, full to the brim to the running over only because God is our God! We need nothing beyond that to make our mouth praise with joyful lips.

6, 7. When I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches. Because You had been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice. If I cannot see Your face, the shadow of Your wing shall be enough for me, for they shall shelter me from all harm and I will, yes, I will rejoice. Under the wings we are near the heart of God and he who know Gods heart of love must be glad.   
8-10. My soul follows hard after You: Your right hand upholds me. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foes. All our sins and all other things or beings that are the enemies of our soul! Christ has overcome and He will leave them upon the field.   
11. But the king shall rejoice in God; everyone that swears by Him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped. Now a short passage in the New Testament about Mary, the sister of Martha.   
Luke 10:38-40. Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary which also sat at Jesus feet, and heard His word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him and said, Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me. Agitated, distressed Martha was afraid that something would go wrong with the dinner. She had too much on her handstoo much on her brain. That led her to blame her sister, Mary, and to try to get the Lord to blame her, too. There is a strong tincture of self-righteousness in Marthas speech.   
41, 42. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, You are careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is necessary and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. I shall not tell her to leave My instruction, said our Lord, or to get up from the position which she occupies. No, you may go about your work, she is honoring Me as much as you are, if not more. This did not mean that Mary was perfect, or that Martha was wholly to be condemned. Both needed to learn much from Jesus and Mary was more in the way of it. Still Martha was doing good service. But you will see that Mary could do something for Christ, too, when the time came.   
John 12:1, 2. Then Jesus, six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper, and Martha served: and Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Martha served she had not given that up. She was a wondrous housewife and she did well to keep to her occupation. Lazarus had been dead and had been raised again. But he was not the center of interestHe that raised him up was there.   
3-7. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then said one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simons son, which would betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of My burying has she kept this. Somebody or other always seemed to object to Mary! If Martha does not do it, Judas will. To be found guilty of excess of love to Christ is such a blessed criminality that I wish we might be executed for it! It were sweet to be put to death for such a crime! It was that that Christ died ofHe was found guilty of excess of love.   
8. For the poor you always have with you; but Me you have not always. It is not every day that you can do something personally and distinctly for Christ, Himself, and therefore, whenever the occasion serves you, be sure to be there to avail yourself of it! True, you can serve Him indirectly by aiding His poor saints. Still, something for Himfor Him, Himself should often be devised as Mary devised this service that day.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3163 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

CUMBERED WITH MUCH SERVING   
NO. 3163

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1909.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, IN THE YEAR 1866.

**Martha was cumbered about much serving.   
Luke 10:40.**

THE preacher will have one hearer tonight to whom his text will be amazingly applicablehimself! Here we have meeting after meeting and engagement after engagement. We are always working as hard as we can, but we have put on much extra canvas just now, serving much and not being exempt from Marthas sin of being cumbered with much serving. I should not wonder but what there may be some others here besides the preacher who may have fallen into the same state of mind and, perhaps, just now while engaged more than ever in Gods work, it may be well for us to pull ourselves up a little and look around us, and see what state we are in, lest, like Martha, we get more and more cumbered, till at last we speak as we ought not to speak and begin to upbraid others who are less wrong than ourselves!

I. We will first say a little on this pointWHAT WAS IT THAT MARTHA WAS PROBABLY CUMBERED ABOUT?   
Her fault was not that she served. Oh, that is no fault! The condition of a servant should be the condition of every Christian. I serve, should be the motto of all the princes of the royal family of God! It was not her fault that she had much serving. We cannot do too much. Let us do all that we possibly canhead, heart and handslet every single power and passion of our nature be engaged in the Masters service! Hereby shall you be My disciples, if you bring forth much fruit. It was no fault of hers that she was busy preparing a feast for the Master. Happy Martha to have an opportunity of entertaining so blessed a Guest! And happy Martha, too, to have the spirit to throw her whole soul so heartily into the engagement. But her fault was that she grew cumbered with much serving, so that she forgot Him and only remembered the service! She overrode her union with Christ by her service of Christand herein was the mischief.  
I do not know what particular part of the service it was that cumbered her, but I do know that any part of it cumbers me, sometimes, and that as the minister of this Church, with our large college and with all sorts of work from morning till night, it is the easiest and most natural thing in the world to get cumbered with much serving, and to get into such a state of head and heart that it is almost impossible to sit at the Saviors feet and at the same time to be serving Him as we ought to do. We ought to be Martha and Mary rolled into one. We should do much service and yet have much communion at the same time.   
Marthas fault, then, was that she grew cumbered. In thinking this matter over, I thought she might, perhaps, have been cumbered in this way. She was the housewife and there were a great many guests comingmore than she had expectedand she thought there was not enough in the house for them. Surely, she said, I have provided for only fifty, and here are a hundred! What shall I do? I did not ask that person over there to come, I am sure, but there is no getting rid of him. I wish I had laid in more store, I told Mary so. I told her there would be more, but she said, No, provide for only so many. I do not believe there is enough. So she fretted over thatand any good housewife might be supposed to do the same. How often have you and I, who are serving God, fretted in the same way? We have said, Oh, what can our poor little Church do? How can such a sum of money be raised? There is much more needed than we shall ever get! The minister has come before his congregation and has feltOne, two, three, four, five, yes, five loavesand these only barley loavesand a few fishes, and these but small. What are they among so many? I wish I had a narrower sphere of labor and had fewer people dependent upon my exertions! This is how we have sometimes thought. Then at other seasons we have saidHow shall I keep on? I have so little strength. I have scarcely had power to do good up till now, how shall I be sustained to the end of the journey? We begin calculating and fear there is not enough meat in the house. With a sincere desire that every child of God should be supplied and that not a single guest at the table should go unfed, we begin to be cumbered because we think there will not be enough!   
I do not know what it was that cumbered Martha, but I should not wonder if she got cumbered about the servants. She had said to one, Now, you must prepare the dish and mind it is to be done in a certain way. And you, Mary, are to prepare the other dish, and you the other one. There is an old proverb which says, The more servants, the more plagues. I do not think it is a true proverb, but some people have found it to be so. Perhaps Martha did. Perhaps there was one letting that roast burn, and another spoiling another roastand so, turning round from one to another, Martha said, It seems as if I ought to be everywhere. There is nothing done unless I am looking after all these people. They are sure to be getting into some mischief or other! I need a hundred hands to do everything myself, or else a hundred eyes to look after those who are doing it. How often Christian ministers, especially, and each Christian in his own position, gets into this same state. You think, Surely I thought I could trust such-and-such a Believer with such a work, but how he blunders at it! I can never give it to him to do again! Then you try another with a certain duty that is very important and that goes wrong. If you have a great machine to work, it is not often, but when there is some cog gets off, or some band that gets snapped, or some wheel that gets out of orderand when one has to look after all these things and to see not only to ones own personal work, but to the work of all these different people and to be sure that they are all kept in their proper place, it is no wonder that one sometimes feelsDear me! I cannot manage all these people! And so one gets cumbered with much serving.

Moreover, very frequently you find that very sad and grave mistakes have been made in things which you thought nobody could make a mistake about. Perhaps you find out that you have been the author of the mistake, yourself, and then you are cumbered again. You say, How can I set that right? How can I retrace that false step? By what possible means can I undo such-and-such a thing that has been done? I suppose that if a captain in battle were to leave his position in the center of the camp and go flying about here and there, he would be pretty sure to lose the victoryand some of us do just that. We have not patience enough to sit still in the center and just to look to the work as a whole, and keep ourselves calm and quiet. We get cumbered over every little thing and about every trifle. We get cumbered, in fact, about the much serving. Now, there is a good motive at the bottom of all thisit is a desire to serve Christ well. It is a wish to do His service in the best, most useful, creditable and successful manner. But there is mischief in it, as we shall have to show, by-and-by. Oh, how my soul longs to have this Church a perfect Church! How I long to see everyone of you at work for Christ! How I desire myself, especially, to preach every time with fire, force and energy! And yet I go home to my bed, sometimes, and toss there because I cannot preach up to my own standard, imperfect as that is. And how I mourn sometimes over this or that Brother who does not seem to understand the dignity of his profession, nor live up to the holiness which becomes the anointed of God and the blood-washed in the fountain which Christ has filled. Oh, dear Friends, the being cumbered with much serving is so easy in my case, and I only instance myself because I know that a face answers to face in a glass, so the heart of man answers to man. I suppose you all, sometimes, get into this stateand in proportion as you are serving Christ will be your temptation to get cumbered with much serving!   
We have already said that you may be cumbered about a great many things. It is amazing how many things there are to cumber one even about an ordinary service. If you are responsible for the service, you are cumbered as to whether you have got the right text and as to whether you have selected the right hymns. You pray that God would bless the Word, and that is right enough, but you are cumbered about it. When the hymn is given out, you are cumbered, perhaps, as to whether it will be sung well, or whether the people will break down. Perhaps there is some discord and if you are anxious to have everything right, you get cumbered about that. Then you are cumbered, possibly, about where the people are to sit. Even such things as these will come across the mind and I should not wonder if my Brothers, the deacons and elders, get cumbered about them as well as the minister! They perhaps get to thinkingDear me, there is Mr. So-and-So over there. I am glad to see him here and I hope the Word will be blessed. Then you get wrong thoughts about such-and-such persons and wonder how they will like such-andsuch expressionsand so on. And so, instead of enjoying the service and entering into the soul of it, you are thinking, I hope it will all go well. I hope the preacher will not use some of those naughty sayings of his that shock the ladies. I hope he will not say any of his rough things tonight. And so you get cumbered. Instead of enjoying the Word as it is preached, and receiving it as it is delivered, there is a anxiety about this and about that, and about 50 other things! And so we are cumbered with much serving.   
I have thus laid the stress upon the ministry, because that is the service of God in an especial manner. But you Sunday school teachers, if you are very anxious about your classand remember, you ought not to be teachers if you are not anxiousyou will, perhaps, get cumbered by the class by looking more to the outward items of your work than to the spirituality of it. You tract-distributors may be doing a great work, but you may get to be more careful about the externals of it than you are about the internals. You City Missionariesfor there are some such heremay also get to think more of the filling up of your journal and about paying a certain quantity of visits, than about living near to God and going in the strength of the Most High to your work. And if so, you will fall into the blunder of poor Martha. With all your zeal for Christ, you will disqualify yourself for any great usefulness and, instead of getting a word of comfort and commendation, you will only get a rebuke from the Lord who will warn you that Mary chose the good part, while Martha, in some degree, despised it! I hope you will not misunderstand meI would not have you do less than you now do. No, the more the better! I would not for a moment dissuade you from the utmost possible efforts which your zeal can suggest. Far be it for me to say, Slacken yourselves in your sowing, or stop yourselves in your plowing. No, go to the end of the field and back againand have no rest until the days work is over! On, on, on, as the racehorse to the finish line, as the arrow to the target! On, as the world speeds on evermore in its own predestinated orbit! On, for God calls you to work while it is called today! On, for souls are perishing! On, for He is worthy for whom you would do this and Christ deserves your utmost labor at the utmost power of your whole spirit. But oh, take care that these labors do not take the place of Christ! Take care that you do not forget the Master in thinking about the dinner that you are going to put on the table for Him. Remember that He is still to be first in your thoughtsfirst in the morning and last at nightand that after all, while it is good to serve, it must always be attended by sitting at the Saviors feet, or else you will not get a reward, but a rebuke.  
II. Anyone here can work out that thought if he understands anything of the spiritual life and, therefore, I will now notice, in the second place, WHAT MARTHA LOST WHILE SHE WAS THUS CUMBERED ABOUT WITH MUCH SERVING.   
She was losing what she could not get at any other time. Jesus Christ was not always at their house. She could at any time prepare a feast, but she could not, at all times hear His voice. His visits are not such everyday things with Believers that they can afford to lose them. Beloved, when we come to Gods House and especially when we come to Christs Table, I think we ought to say to ourselves, Now, at any rate, I will bid my Martha-cares begone. I can attend to them when I have done. There is plenty of time, besides, for my cares, even for my cares for Christ. But now that the Lord is here, now that His people are met and He has promised to be with them, I shall have done with all my care and will give myself up to seek living and personal fellowship with Him. I will forget the dishes on the table, and the servants in the kitchen, and the fires, and everything else in the housethey must go as they may. I will give the best orders I can and then I will leave these things, for I am now going to get a privilege which I cannot always getI am going to listen to His loving Words as they come welling up fresh from my Saviors heart. I am going to sit down right at His feet and drink in that which He would teach me. I think you will acknowledge that it is easier to serve than it is to commune. You will have observed that Joshua never grew weary when he was fighting with the Amalekites. It was hard work, but he did not get his arms weakened at it. But when Moses was on the top of the mountain in prayer, he had to have two others to hold his hands up! So is it with us. The more spiritual the exercise, the sooner the soul tires of it. We could keep on preaching better than we could keep on praying and it is easier to pray in public than it is to pray in secret. And let me say that even in secret it is easier to pray aloud than it is to sit still in your communion with Christ in the solemn silence of the soul. The choicest fruits are generally the hardest to growand the most spiritual engagements are the most difficult for us to manage. Beloved, we ought to have an eye to this! We ought to take care that we do not neglect these merely external things which are good enough in themselves, these outward attending to ordinances, a sermon, and so onbut we ought also to take care that while we remember these in their proper places, we do not let these things crowd out better things, but see to it that we get to Christ and enjoy living, personal fellowship with Him!   
I am afraid, too, that at this time Martha was losing her reverence for her Savior. You will ask how she did this. I do not like her expression, Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her that she help me. I do not think she ought to have spoken so to her Savior. The words do not sound gentle. It seems as if she had got to be so familiar with waiting upon Him, that she had lost some of the due respect which she should have paid to the great Prophet of Israel, her Savior and her Lord! This is one of the great dangers of those who serve God in the engagements of the sanctuary. I have had to confess and have mentioned it at ministers meetings often, and have heard others confess that familiarity with sacred things is a temptation, very often, to lead us to read our Bibles for our congregations and not for ourselvesand to pray ex officio instead of praying with our whole hearts to God, ourselves, as though we ourselves needed the blessing! I am sure, too, that this is true of all the other officials in Gods House. If a man is not saved, and becomes a minister, I do not think there is a chance of his being saved afterwardshe had better be anything than be an unsaved minister! I have noticed the same thing with regard to pew-openers and such like persons who are not converted before they take their officesand I pray that those of you who have the filling up of such positions, never to appoint unconverted people, for they may not be converted afterwards. They will be so busy putting people into their seats and doing different things, that they will be cumbered with much serving!

I did once say, and gave very great offense, indeed, by it, that the people who take down my sermons ought to have the Grace of God in their hearts, or else they would not get a blessing, for certainly the mechanical act of writing must prevent the mind from entering in all its fullness into the meaning of the utterance! Our dear Brothers here who take such an interest in our services, and to whose kind care and watchfulness we owe so much of the quiet we enjoy on Sabbath days with our great crowds, I am sure will excuse meindeed I will not asked to be excusedwhen I say they must mind that these things do not run away with their spirituality, for there is such a fear in serving Christ that familiarity with His service will tend to make us lose our respect for Him! God grant that instead of this, our reverence for Christ may grow more and moreand the more we serve Him, the more humbly may we lie down at His feet.   
But I think Martha was losing something more than this, and that was her humility. If she had had much humility, she would have known that Mary was quite as good as she was, herself, and even a little better. But instead of that she took it upon herself to call Mary to account and even to complain to Christ about her. Many of our complaints about ministers and other good people show our own lack of humility. When I think that my Brothers have many faults, I may well remember how many I have, myselfand instead of thinking how badly some people do, I ought to suspect that I might have done a great deal worse if I had been in their place! Indeed, it strikes me that the wise man is rather delighted that things are as well as they are, than displeased that they are not any better, for he knows that the best of men are but men at the best. He knows from his own experience that men are very likely to go fast in the way of error and to travel very slowly in the way of rightand so when he does see a cause prosper, or a holy deed done, he is grateful to God for it! Though he does wish that there were more, yet he is grateful to God that there is so much genuine piety, so much brotherly love, so much earnestness, so much prayerfulness as there is in the midst of the world. Let us not be so censorious, always judging this man and that man. If you had been in his place would you have done better? Have you to pay his wages at the last? Is he your servant? Then who are you that judge anothers servant? To his own Master shall he stand or fall, and perhaps the very man you judge is more acceptable to God than you are! He does not serve so much as you do. He does not preach so many sermons, nor teach so many people, nor publish so many books and so onbut he sits more at Jesus feet than you do, lives nearer to Christ and is bringing more honor to the Redeemers name in his humble, quiet obscurity than you are with all your publicity and with all your work! It seems to me that we are in danger of losing our respect for our fellows if we think so much of ourselves.   
Does it not strike you, by the way, that very often when we get cumbered about much serving, there is pride at the bottom of it? Why do we want to serve God in this way or in that way? The preacher wants those who come to say, What a capital sermon, and, What a fine fellow he is! Or, perhaps, the hearers want people to say when they go out, Now I enjoyed it! When we do all this and when we want to see our Sunday school class very numerous, and to see many conversions, is it not just possible that at the bottom of it all we think, it would look so well and we should be able to say that there is so much done? Brother, if you say you have never felt like this, I can only say that you must be a very superior person. I know I have often felt like it and I here make confession of that wicked vanity which is so very common a complaint among us! We get cumbered, not so much about whether Christ is served, but whether we shall be thought to have done anything and to have done it in a proper way! Oh, to shake ones self from all these beggarly rags of selfishness and to be content to do Gods work to the best of ones ability and to say, My Master, as to whether this looks well or does not look well in the sight of my fellows, is nothing! I gave it to You as You gave it to me. Accept it, my Master. Accept it because I love You and yet more, because You love me!   
Martha, then, was losing a great deal, but in addition to all this, she was also losing communion with Christ. Mrs. Rowe says somewhereIf all the 12 Apostles were to preach at the time when I ought to be in prayer, I would not leave my closet to hear one of them, or all of them. And another used to sayI would not be kept out of my closet for all the world. But we are so easily turned away from sitting at Christs feet to go to work! We so easily cut short the time of prayer for the sake of doing more for Christ! Communion with Christ is the most precious thing! And once lost, I do not care what you did in the time when you ought to have been communing with Christyou may have won coppers, but you have lost sovereigns, for many have earned pence, but you have lost diamonds! For your own sake, and for the sake of those whom you would bless, you must see to it that sitting at the Saviors feet is not neglected, even though it is under the specious pretext of waiting upon Him. The first thing for our souls health, the first thing for His Glory and the first thing for our own usefulness is to keep ourselves in perpetual communion with the Lord Jesusand to see that the vital spirituality of our religion is maintained over and above everything else in the world!   
III. Having thus shown you what Martha lost, I would now like to OFFER SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY PREVENT OUR BEING CUMBERED WITH MUCH SERVING.   
There is one consideration which has done me a deal of good and it is thisthat the Lord Jesus got on very well before we were born, and it is very likely that He will get on exceedingly well when we are dead. When one thinks, Oh, it is so important that such-and-such a point should be attended to. I must throw my whole strength into that. And then the next day there seems to be something else so very necessary to be done! And then something goes amiss there and something else herebecause one cannot be everywhereand one begins to be troubled. It might well be said to us at such a time, Now, are you really such a very important person after all? Before we were born, Gods cause prospered and when we are dead, if we have been useful in our lives, we may, perhaps, leave a little gap for a little time, but it will soon be filled up and nobody will know itand Gods cause will go on just as well without us! I hope I do not inconvenience you, said the gnat when he settled on the horn of a bull. I did not know you were there, said the bull. So, sometimes we seem to think, I hope my absence will not cause inconvenience to suchand-such a cause. And we might very well be answered, Why, nobody knew you had anything to do with it! What difference will your absence make? I do not want you to be careless about things on this account, but I do want you not to be cumbered about them on this account. That is not a bad philosophy, though it is very often very wickedly appliedIt will be all be the same in a hundred years time. Well, really, it will. Though the waves do go back, each one of them, after they have come up on the shore, yet none of them need regret that they die because every wave comes up beyond its fellow, and though there may be no advance in each one particular wave, but even a receding, yet the great ocean, itself, is going forward! And so, if one little particular part of the work that has been left to me does not go on as I could wish, yet, O God, the great sea of Your Church is going on in the fullness of its glory and it shall yet cover the sands of time and break upon the cliffs in an eternal spray of everlasting song! Let us be consoled in this matter. We are not such big bodies, after all, and if the thing which we devise may not succeed, yet that is not the main thing, for Jehovah still reigns and Christ still prospers!   
There is another considerationnamely, that it is pretty certain that if we have done our best for our Master, our fretting will not improve things. Farmers have been troubled, sometimes, when the rain has been coming on at harvest time, but I never remember to have observed that the glass went up on that account, nor have I ever head of a single rain-drop whose little watery heart relented because of the sorrow of the agriculturistit came down just the same. So, if our fretting over Gods work would improve it, Brothers and Sisters, let us fret! Let us fret together in harmony! But if it really will not, and if after having done all we can in prayer and holy work, the thing does not go on quite as well as we could wish it, then let us say, My Master, let it be according to Your will, and if it is according to Your mind, it is sure to be according to my mind, or if not, Lord, give me a better mind. May we be brought down to this Your will be done. If we had more of the spirit of Christian resignation, we should feel that as we cannot add one cubit to our own stature by our own thought, so neither can we add a single drachma of success to the Church of God by all our unbelieving cumbering of ourselves about much serving!   
Another consideration may help usnamely, that, after all, it is not our work, but His work in which we are engaged. I once heard a very pretty illustration from one of our ministers who said that he was moving his books from his study downstairs to another room which he had taken for his study upstairs, and his little boy said, Papa, let me help you. The little boy was not able to do anything, but the father thought he must encourage his desire for industry and he said, Yes, you can take that little book. But the boy did not like to take the little bookhe wanted to be a man and carry a big book. So he took a big book and got it to the foot of the stairsand there he sank down and began to cry, for he could carry it no further. And what, said the father, do you think it came to? Why, I had to carry the book upstairs and the boy, too! So it is with us we ask Christ to let us do something for Him and we are not satisfied to do only thatwe have a natural and a very proper desire to be doing more. And so we undertake something which we cannot do and we sit down and fret as if the book never would get upstairs till

we carried it upand then the good Father comes along and takes the book and the little child, too, and carries both. Oh, instead of sitting down and crying, say, My Father, I have the will to do this, but I cannot. Come and do it, my Father, for it is not my work, it is Your work. You remember how Moses put it. I have often put it in that shape, and may the Master forgive me if I have done it unbelievingly. Moses said, Have I begotten all this people? And often when the enormous weight of this Church has pressed upon my soul, I have said to Christ, Lord Jesus, I never married this Church. It is no spouse of mineit is Your wife and I am but as one that unties the laces of her shoes. I am but as one that pours water upon her feet that she may wash them. I am your present servant in the body, but the work is too much for meYou must do it. I have cared for Your flock till I could say that by night it has distressed me, and by day *My joys and sorrows mingled seem   
As if they would consume me.*   
But, Lord, I never bought this flock with blood. I am not to have this flock at the last! It is no flock of Mine. I am only Your hired shepherd. You will give me my wage, but oh, it is Yours to keep off the wolf! It is Yours to preserve each lamb and carry it in Your bosom and gently to lead each troubled one in the whole flock. I think we must often do thisthrow it off upon our God, for it is His burden, not ours. Cast all our care on Him, for He cares for us. And especially leaving the serving of Himself to Him whose service and whose work it really is.   
Yet, again. Another thing that may comfort you is that sometimes when things are going very badly, as we think, they are really going best. We do not always know, I fancy, when things are prospering. We imagine that the Church is in good health because certain outward signs manifest themselves. Persons sometimes meet those of us who are rather stout, and they say, How well you look! I do not know about that. In our flesh there dwells no good thing. I am afraid that with some of us that is no very great sign of health and we might be glad enough to get rid of it. So sometimes when the Church seems to be in a prosperous condition, we congratulate ourselves upon its wonderful healthiness. I do not know that we ought to do that! Sometimes the corn is best when an onlooker who does not understand it thinks it is worstand sometimes when a little boat is borne on one side till she almost ships a sea through the tremendous gale that is blowing, the landsman thinks there is mischief ahead, but the old sailor who understands all about it says, No, they are going at a great rate now. So, at times our ship lurches a bit, and seems as if it shipped whole seas of mischief, but it is then that the mighty breeze of the Divine Spirit is really given to us! Do you not think, Beloved, that some of the worst sermons that are ever preached, in the judgment of critics, are really the best? What a fool I have been dozens of times! I have thought in my conceitWell, now, that is a sermon that is likely to be blestand yet I have never heard of any blessing from it! I have thought at other times when I am finished, Please, God, if I ever get that subject again, I will treat it better. What a poor sermon! And yet two or three Church Meetings later, there will come one, two, three, perhaps half a dozen who were blessed and converted to God by my poor sermon. The Lord help me, then, to preach poor sermons and grant that I may always preach so that He will bless it, no matter whether I like it or whether you like it, as long as God is pleased to bless the sermon! I dare say you Sunday school teachers have often found that when you have done worst, God has done best, and He has permitted you to think it was worst in order that you might bring all the glory to His feet and praise His name!   
Should it not be one reason, then, why we should cast off our care, that we serve a very generous Master? There are some masters whom you cannot pleasewhen you have done your best, they will still find some faultfor they have a quick eye for a fault. But our Lord Jesus seems as if He could not find fault with His people, and when we have done our best, though it is a poor, poor thing, yet He takes it and so transforms it by one touch of His own gracious and pierced hands, that we do not know it again! It is more His than ours and it is accepted by Him. He does not receive our works because of their intrinsic excellencies, but because He worked them in us and because the motive for which we have performed them is honorable to Himself. Master Brooks says that, Fond friends will accept crooked sixpences, and a little piece of forget-me-not, and set great store by these love-tokens. Even so does the Savior! He takes our poor worthless works which have no intrinsic value in them and sets great store by them, saying of that cup of cold water which you gave away and which you never thought of againInasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you did it unto Me. I do not doubt He will say at the lastYou did want to serve Me. You did long to honor Me and I accept it. John Bunyan says if you send a servant off for the doctor and you tell him to go on horseback as fast as ever he canand there is but a very sorry nag in the stable, so the man uses the spur and the whip, and tugs at the bridle, but cannot make the horse goyou see that the man would go if he could, and so you do not blame him. So, he says, our poor flesh is that sorry nag, but the spirit is willing, and Jesus Christ looks on us and saysTruly the flesh is weak, he would go if he could. And so He takes the will for the deed and does not blame us, but covers our faults in the mantle of His love.   
Now I hope we are beginning to feel better. I hope we are not going to leave off caring about the work, but only leave off being cumbered about it. I hope we shall be anxious to see souls saved and desirous to conduct all our labors for Christ in the best possible mannerbut I hope we shall not sit down and worry ourselves as though there were no God to bless, no Christ to perfume our works with the incense of His merits and no Holy Spirit to make our very infirmities yield His Glory! Let us remember that our Father lives, that our God lives, that He who brings good out of evil lives. Let us set up our banners in His name and go forward rejoicing that He is with us and will be with us to the end!   
Come, you Marysif you have been upbraided, mind not the unbraiding! Your living near to Christ is that good part always stay there. Serve the Master, but do not break your fellowship. Do all that in you lies for Christ, but also sit down under His shadow and let His fruit be sweet to your taste. If we sometimes did less, we should do more. If we had fewer outward engagement and more private dealings with God, we should be richer. The best commerce is commerce with Heaven. The richest merchants are those who negotiate with a Covenant God. Those who get the largest estates are those who have learned to traffic in Heavens markets. If you would be strong, live upon the promises! If you would be happy, live with the Promise-Keeper. If you would be mighty to win souls, be mighty on your knees! And if you would be like your Master with a shining face among the multitude, be much with your Master where He is transfigured upon the Mount.   
I preach but poorly to you, but I must not begin to be cumbered about that. Here I would leave the matter, only I would to God that you all had an interest in the things I have been speaking of! Some of you do not care to serve God at all. You serve yourselvesyou serve your own passions. May the Lord bring you to serve Himand the door of service is at the Cross. The way to begin to be a servant is to go to the place where He took upon Himself the form of a Servant and was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Trust Jesus. This is the work of God, if you would do it, that you believe on Him whom He has sent. May God enable you now to trust His dear Son with all your hearts! And then after that may you go and serve Him, and serve Him effectivelybut God grant that you be not Cumbered with much serving.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3469 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

MARTHA AND MARY   
NO. 3469

A SERMON   
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**And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is necessary; and Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.**   
Luke 10:41-42.

I THINK I see the Man of Sorrows as He is traversing the high road, attended by His few friends and disciples. Where will He refresh Himself when the time is come to cease from toil and take food? Where is His house? Surely the Great Prophet has some place wherein to rest? Alas, He has none! Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head. However, what He has not of His own, friends will afford Him. Martha, a disciplenot a fullgrown one, but one who had begun to learn something of the Truth of Godmeets Him at the door of her house, at the entrance to the village of Bethany, and she invites Him to come in. Jesus Christ, who had often accepted an invitation from an enemy, was glad to accept one from a friend. So He goes into the house, with His friend, Lazarus, and sits down. No sooner is He sat down, with His disciples around Him, than He falls to preaching. A sermon is none the worse for being preached in a private house. Martha and Mary stood listening to Him. Stood, did I say? Mary sits down at His feet and Martha, having listened for a little while, remembers that she has many family cares. The dinner must be made ready, so she betakes herself into her kitchen and is very busy with her necessary cookery. She needs a little extra help, and she comes back into the room and sees Mary sitting at Jesus feet. Seeming rather irritable, Martha appeals to Jesus, Do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?hoping that the Master would chide Marybut He rather defends her, and implies a gentle censure upon Martha, when He says, Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is necessary; and Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.

This little quick reply must have surprised Martha! She did not expect it would come to herself being reproved and Mary being commended! But so it wasand the incident, we think, may give us some profitable instruction. Let us see if we can find out what it is.

I. WE WILL TAKE THE CASE OF MARTHA FIRST.  
There is no reason to find any great fault with her. Martha was a good woman. The Lord Jesus loved Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus. Since He appreciated Marthas character, it is not for us to depreciate it. Martha was an excellent housewife. Perhaps a little too fussyI know not what better word to usea little too particular about the little things. Troubling and vexing herself about domestic arrangements in spreading the board and serving the provisions. She was, perhaps, a little too prone to disquiet her mind by the scrupulousness of her tastesstill she was an admirable woman, one who kept her house in good order. No mean prize is it, especially for the working man, to have a Martha for his wife one who orders her household well. Indeed, so commendable is this in Christian women, that the Apostle might well say, Let them first learn to show piety at home. If your childrens stockings are not darned, if their clothes are not mended, if the buttons are not put on their dresses at the proper time, I would not give much for your Christian example! A housewife should see to these details and, before all others, for neatness and industry should be the woman whose heart is right before the Lord. One or two friends, I see, are smiling. Let them smile if they like. I only hope they will mind my homely advice and attend to their home dutiesthen they will make their husbands smile with satisfaction and their families will look brighter. If they have ungodly husbands, it will tend to paint religion in fairer colors, and to commend it to their esteem.

In what respect, then, was Martha to blame? Well, though she got a little censure, you see Jesus does not upbraid her severely. His words are very kindMartha, Martha. We do not address women thus familiarly by name, you know, unless we are very intimate with them. I would not venture to call you by your Christian name, because I do not know you well enough. We only do that with our friends and kinsfolk. So in the kindest way, making Himself very familiar with her, Jesus said, Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things Twas little to say. He only indicated the fact, without uttering half as much complaint as she made against her sister, Mary. What was her fault, then? Well, we think it was just thisthe Lord Jesus Christ did not often come round those parts preaching. He had a large dioceseHe was the travelling Bishop of the whole land. And it did seem to cast a little slight on His ministry for Martha to think more of the beef that was being roasted and the vegetables that were being prepared for the table, than of that rich food, that Bread which came from Heaven, which He was giving them! If a preacher came to us but every now and then, dear Brothers and Sisters, I think the Word of God would become so precious to us that we might be pardoned neglecting some family cares in order to listen to him. But Martha, you see, put her family cares somewhat before the precious Word of Christ. And, besides, she seems rather to have looked at her religion as a doing something which Christ needed of her, than as a taking the one thing necessary which she needed from Christ! Of such people there is now no lack. I trust they are in the faith, though they are but babes in Grace. Their practical piety consists, to a large extent, in what they ought to do for Christ, and what He expects from them, rather than in realizing that delightful sense which some Believers have of what Jesus has done for them!

Now what I can do for Christ is, I am sure, very little, and is a poor subject to engross all my thoughts. What He did for me is so amazing so matchless, so unspeakable, so glorious, that I ought to give that the major part of my attention! I may sometimes run with Martha to do what Christ needs of me, but I think I ought more frequently to sit with Mary to receive from Christ what I need from Him. Your religion is not of a first-class order if it is altogether looking at your practice, and not at the finished and perfect work of Christ. There will be at least a tendency in you to legality, and that tendency is so dangerous that it deserves to be rebuked. Though I would rebuke it as tenderly as I can, yet it must be somewhat sharply, that you may be sound in the faith. Martha, Martha, Christ does not stand in need of you half as much as you do of Him! It is meet and proper for you to think how you may economize time to attend the House of Prayer, and how you shall bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and how you shall save a little money to give to the poor or to Christs Church. All these things are right. It is well you should do them, but oh, remember, Christ did more for you! Let your thoughts be fixed on His Cross, on His life, on His death, or else you will get to be a Pharisee. Ah, Martha, you will get to think that you are saved by your own doingsand then it is all over with you if you ever come to think that! This was one of Marthas faults. She seemed to be more anxious about what she should do for Christ than she was grateful about what Christ had done for her!

Then, you see, this led her to fret, and that is always wrong. She began to be peevish and be vexed. Oh, she wanted to have a fine entertainment for Christ. She had out all the best dishes and she would have all the food served in the daintiest manner. She would have nothing put on the table but what was the best of the best for such a One as her Lord! So far this was right and much to her credit, but as little mishaps are apt to cause great annoyances, so she got her mind troubled and her temper irritated. Thus she fretted and vexed herself till the day that ought to have been all happiness and sunshine, because Christ had come, became all worry and hurry, distracting to her mind and distressing to her nerves. Now that is wrong and lamentable. Remember, Christian, whatever you have to do, you should always cast all your care on Him who cares for you! Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, make known your needs unto God. You are to be thoughtful, diligent, prudentbut anxious, carking, vexatious cares you are to turn out of the house as soon as possible, or else you will hear your Master say, Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things. You must not be fretful about trifles, provoked with other people, or disquieted with yourself. Your fretting will not make things betterthe ruffling of your temper will not smooth the current of affairs. Be calm. Be quiet. Be patient. Then the multitude of your labors will not disturb the serenity of your mind though many things may have to be done! Much care may be greatly lightened, if it is not altogether avoided.

The next thing to blame in Martha was that while she was earnest, herself, in serving the Lord, she began to upbraid her dear sister, Mary. Some minds are naturally censorious and prone to fault-finding. There are others who under exciting emotions, begin to criticize, censure and accuse. No, Martha, you have no right to judge Mary. You are doing what you think to be rightshe is doing what she thinks to be rightlet her alone. There are some earnest young men I know who would have everybody quite as zealous as theyand so would Ibut there may happen to be some Christians who cannot, through infirmity, do quite as much. And some of these young men will lose their temper with them and, perhaps, speak disrespectful words of them. This is not right of you. You must not judge another mans servantto his own master he shall stand or fall. Martha, Martha, Martha, you have no business to find fault with Mary! And you busy Christians, you good, busy people who do so much for Jesus, and wish you could do moredo not sometimes grow angry because others are not as zealous as you are! Never let a bad temper be mixed with earnestness, for it will be like a dead fly in a pot of ointmentit will spoil the whole. Be not rash, Martha, in your judgment of Mary?

I fear, too, that Martha censured her Lord a littleand was not that a harsh thing to do? Let us read the words, for fear I should do her an injustice. Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me. Was not that an unkind thing to say? Jesus, do You not care? Of courseHe was always caring for every one of them! They never had a care but what He had it before them. All their burdens He was willing to bear! All their sufferings He was willing to relieve! And He came into this world on purpose to redeem them with His blood. It was a harsh thing to say, Master, do You not care? And so it is with some Christiansthey do not set their eyes enough upon Christs work and are all too busy with work for Christ. Hence they will even upbraid the Master, Himself! These elder Brothersand Martha, you know, was an elder Sisterthese elder Brothers say, Lo, these many years have I served you, and yet you never gave me a kid that I should make merry with my friends. But as soon as this, your son, was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf. This is a bad spirit, a very bad spirit. I heard of a man, some time ago, calling himself a minister of Christ, who said he did not believe in revivals, nor did he look for any good from preaching in theaters, For, he said, If God designs to bless the Church, it stands to reason that He will first save those people who usually go to a place of worship, and not the riffraff. Now I did not like that speech! I hope he was a good man, but I am sure he spoke in a bad spiritand it was with something like that spirit Martha spoke. She seemed to feel, I have done all sorts of things. I have been busy and anxious, and I have taken no rest. Nobody knows how hot I have made myself, working with my own hands, and superintending other peoples work. I have hurried up and down stairs, with all the toil and all the responsibility upon meyet here is Mary, doing nothing, and Christ is just as pleased with her as if she were doing a thousand things. Now I think Christ said, Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things, to rebuke the cropping up of a little of that ill spirit which is always culpable and mischievous whenever it appears.

To close with MarthaI hope we have not been too severe upon her conduct, or reflected too much upon her charactershe may be used as a picture of the self-righteous. Perhaps there are such here. There is a John or a James among you, perhaps, who says, I go to my place of worship very punctually. I order my household with propriety. I conduct my business with integrity. I give to the poor. I subscribe to charities. I take my part in works of benevolence, and so on. Ah, Friends, you are cumbered with much serving, but you will never get to Heaven that way! Only one thing is necessary, and that is the finished righteousness of Christ! Or is it Martha, there, that good woman I think I heard say, Well, I have brought up my children creditably. I have always behaved in such a manner that the neighbors give me a good character. I have never neglected my religious duties, so I trust I shall go to Heaven. Ah, Martha, Martha! Those good things of yours will sink you! You cannot swim to Heaven with them! One thing is necessaryand that one thing is the finished righteousness of Jesus! Leave these fine things that cumber you, and come to Jesus just as you are, and you shall have the good part which cannot be taken from you!

But it is treating Martha too badly to make her a picture of the selfrighteous. I shall only notice, now, that she is only like what some of us sometimes are. When the minister comes into the pulpit he sometimes feelsat least I myself doa great deal of concern about the friends that have to stand about the lights, about the draughts and numerous other trivial matters. Full often I reproach myself for being thus cumbered about many things. Instead of being like Martha, the minister should be like Mary, sitting at Jesus feet, and giving his undivided attention to the Masters words! This is too often the case with the deacons and the Elders. They may be thinking about how arrangements may be made for the convenience of the congregation, and filled with anxiety that all may go off well, especially at extraordinary services. They are exposed to the same temptation that Martha was. I dare say my dear Brothers who carry round the bread and the cup at the Lords Supper sometimes feel that they miss some of Marys repose, and get some of Marthas cares in attending to that service! They would rather, perhaps, sit with you in the pew, like Mary, to enjoy the feast, rather than be like Martha to serve the tables. Others of you are thinking about your children, your sons and your daughters. As you are anxiously praying the Lord to bless the Word to their souls, you, too, may sometimes get into such an anxious state as to be like Martha. Oh, it will be well for you if you can take the attitude of Marysitting at the Saviors feet, profound in reverence, yet familiar in communion with your blessed Lordawed by His Presence, cheered by His smile, impressed with His Word, delighted with His voice, catching the faintest syllable which shall fall from His Divine lipsfinding in Him enough to enthrall your soul with sacred love and leaving Him to care for you, while you only care to sit at His feet and learn of Himstationed where no grievous looks or hasty words of Martha can tempt you to move away!

II. LET US NOW TURN TO THE CHARACTER OF MARY and see if we can find anything in that for practical use.   
Do not think that Mary was lazy, or that she preferred hearing sermons to doing her work. On another occasion she proved that she did not withhold her service or spare her substance, for she anointed the head of our Lord. She showed that she did not mind a sacrifice, for she did for Jesus what only one other person ever didshe anointed Him! But here was the point about Marys charactermay it be found in yours and in mineshe gave her attention less to the care of the body than to a care for the soul! In truth, she loved to drink of the Living Water which Christ gives to those who are thirsty. She attended to the one thing necessary. Alas, the world does not think that the care of the soul is the one thing necessary. As a good old writer says, The world thinks this is the one thing needless. They can dispense with religion, because, to their notion, it is an encumbrance. We have heard some people call money the one thing necessary. They despise religion and find their treasure in vanities that perish with the usingand their joy in the things of earth that pass away like the rippling current or the revolving seasons!   
Religion is the one thing necessary to us all. It is the one thing necessary to the minister. Without true religion in his heart, he is an impostor! He has taken upon himself an errand upon which the Master never sent hima responsibility which shall crush his soul lower than the lowest Hell! Lord, have mercy upon those ministers who dare to preach what they have not felt. But religion is also the one thing necessary for the hearersso necessary, indeed, that if they have it not, all the sermons and prayers in the world will be but as fuel for their condemnation! We must have you, my dear Hearers, brought to lay hold on Christ, or else impress signs and professions, formality and morality, vows and votive offerings will but drug your conscience, threaten your hope and end in black despair! True religion is the one thing necessary for the aged. I see some here whose bald heads and gray hairs admonish them that they are drawing near to the grave. Ah, my aged Friend, what will you do, where will you be a little while hence, unless you have a Savior to rest upon? In the swellings of Jordan, how will you fare if there is no kind Spirit near you to say, I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God? This, too, is the one thing necessary for the middle-aged. Busy with care, toiling from morning till night as some of you areif you have not the Grace of God in your hearts, and the comforts of the Holy Spirit in your experience, what will you do? You will bring up your children for Satan! You will be the instruments of unrighteousness! All your works shall but earn for you the wages of heavy sorrow and bitter lamentationsyour present life an endless regret! And how necessary is true religion for the young! It makes the young man wise. It makes the maiden fair   
*A flower, when offered in the bud,   
Is no vain sacrifice.*   
We should not wait until we have grown old and decrepit, and then bring to God the blind and the lame for a sacrifice! Let us give Him the young bullock. Let us offer to Him the lambs of a year old. Since some die while they are young, let us repent while we are young, and believe in Jesus while the charm of springtime enlivens us, for it is the one thing necessary to have faith in Him! There are other things, you will tell me, that are necessary. I answer, Yes, but this is the especially, preeminently, and universally necessary thing! Imagine a man in the condemned cell at Newgate. There he sits, busy writing letters. He is going to die a felons death, knowing it will cruelly grieve his family. He is doing the best thing he can dowriting letters of consolation to them and trying to settle his little affairs. In comes the Kings messenger and he says to the manonly the man is too busy to listen to himI have his Majestys free pardon. The condemned man says, I cannot attend to you. I cannot attend to you. I have got a letter to write to my wife. He goes on with his writing, but he is interrupted again with the news of his Majestys free pardon. I cannot attend to it, he says, I have to write to my children, for I have to die next Monday, and he goes on writing. Now do you not see, if the man will but stop and think, the free pardon will do far more for him than all his letters can? And if he shall but get that, he can attend to all the rest, by-and-by! So is it with faith. A free pardon is offered by God, but you say, Oh, but I have other things to look to. I tell you, you can look to them afterwards, but while the Angel of Mercy stands by and presents you with a free pardon, I pray you take the one thing necessary and mind the other things in due time!   
There is a wreck, yonder, a wreck far out upon the waste salt sea, and on it are men who are starving, till the bones start through their skin. They have hoisted a flag upon a pole. Those poor creatures are almost destitute of clothingthe salt sea washes them, and at night they are all but frozen to death, and they only preserve their lives by huddling one upon another. These people need a thousand things, you tell me. They need some generous diet to restore their flesh. They need their friends. They need their native country. They need their families and households. They need fresh clothing. Yes, but I tell you one thing is necessarythey need a friendly sail and if they can but see a ship in the distance, and that ship can come to them, they have all they need! And so you that are looking after bread, and after your families, and so onoh, this is all well, but still, while you are on the raft, and are perishing, what you really need is Christ, who, like a friendly sail in the distance, comes to save you and is willing to take you on board His ship at onceand to give you all you need! One thing is necessary! Oh, Jane, may you hold onto that! And John, and Thomas, and William, and Margaretany of you, all of youdo the same! Leave other things for a little while. You know you can work and pray. You can go about your business and yet have faith in Christ. This will not interfere with your household cares. But do, I pray you, imitate Mary in getting hold of the all-important, the absolutely necessary one thinga living faith in a living Savior! This was the first reason why Mary was commendedshe got a hold of the one thing necessary.   
The next thing she was commended for was thisit was her own choiceMary has chosen the good part. Some of our captious friends will be saying, Ah! Ah! Are you now going to preach free-will and tell us that it is mans choice? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, you know what I think of mans willthat it is a slave, bound in iron fettersbut yet God forbid that I should alter Scripture to suit anybodys Doctrine, or even my own! Mary did choose the better part, and every man that is saved chooses to be saved. I know that at the back of his choice, and as the cause of his choice, there is Gods choice, but still, the Grace of God always imparts Grace to the mans heart. No one is dragged to Heaven! Nor does anyone ever go to Christ against his will

the soul must be made willing in the day of Gods power. This is the triumph of Gods Gracenot that He takes men to Heaven as we might carry machines there, but that He expressly acts upon the human mind, leaves it as free as ever it was, and yet makes it perfectly obedient to His own will! Mary chooses. God had chosen her in old eternity and, therefore, she chooses Him *Chosen of Him ere time began,   
I choose Him in return.*   
Now let us ask, for we cannot merit any commendationhave we chosen Christ? Have we chosen His cause, His truth, His Cross? If you have got a religion that is not a matter of choice to you, I am afraid it is not of much use. If you attend any religion because you mustif you follow it of necessity, from a sense of duty, from the goading of fear, or from the dictates of customI am afraid, when your religion is put in the scales, it will be found wanting. It must be a matter of solemn and deliberate choice with you! Now which would be your present choice? Could the pleasures of this world be all daintily painted before your eyesevery joy that could regale the sensesmusic to charm the ears, perfumes for the nostrils, sweets for the mouth and landscapes for the eyes, on the one side. And on the other side, let Christ and His Cross be put before you which would you chose? I know which some of you have chosenmay God alter your choice! But I trust there are some here who can say, Choose? Why, I have once and for all chosen Christ! I have counted the cost and I reckon the reproach of Christ to be greater treasures than all the riches of Egypt. You are commended. Christ gently speaks to you a word of love when He says, Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from her.   
Mary was commended, too, because she had chosen the good part. It is good to know Christ, good in every senseit is good for ourselvesit is good toward God, and God toward man. It is good in the sense of comfort. It is good in the sense of morality. Nobody can say anything against true religion who judges fairly. Even the judge upon the bench dares not say that to have a new heart and a right spirit is not good. True religion has in it everything that is lovely and of good repute, honest in the sight of men and devout in the sight of God. Oh, Mary, now you have left your Martha-cares, and are resting wholly and only on Jesus, you have this, for your hearts contentthat you have not merely chosen the good, but that you have chosen the best of all the goodthe good part with which no other portion can bear the least comparison!   
There is one other commendation, and with that we close. Mary had chosen that which could never be taken away from her. Of the many things which some of us take a pride and a pleasure in possessing, we have not many that cannot be easily taken away. Though we may have a fair character, any lying slanderer may take that away for a time. We have a housethe flames may take that away and leave nothing but a heap of ashes. We have a beloved spousegrim death may stretch her in the coffin. We have dear children, the delight of our eyes, but we know that mortal is written on their brows. We have friends with whom we take sweet counsel, but they are dropping off one by one   
*Who has not lost a friend?*   
We have many comforts of which adversity might deprive us in a moment. Those that were once highly esteemed among men are soon forgotten, even by their neighbors. Their choice companions do not know them in the day of their poverty. Riches take to themselves wings and flee away. All the creature things we have may be taken away from us. The poor man, perhaps, thinks that he is exempt from the peril because he has no riches to be taken from him, but he has other things than silver and gold which pertain to the life that now isand they will all be taken away. And at last there will come the greatest thief, Death, the Spoiler. When he finds us weak, stretched upon the bed and utterly helpless, how he will take all our things away! He will clutch the misers gold. Though he seeks with eager grasp to retain it, Death will tear it away from his expiring grip. He will take away from the dying one all dear friends, his consort and offspring. Closing his eyes and blinding them, he shall see no more forever. Stopping his ears and sealing them, he shall hear no more the way of loving consolation. Touching his heart and arresting its beat, his desire will cease. All things shall then be taken away. But there is one thingoh, that we may choose itthere is one thing that neither life nor death can take away! It is the good part, a good hope in Jesus, a true faith in Jesus, a perfect love to Jesus, a vital union with Jesus! Come, Death, you may clutch, but you cannot take away that which Jesus holds with living hands! Come, you devils of Hell, you may seek to tear away these jewels from me, but   
*Stronger is He than death or Hell,   
His Majestys unsearchable.*   
And He defies the sons of darkness and repels all their rage! These things cannot be taken away from you!   
I think I see you going through the dark valley. Doubts, like troops of robbers, seek to slay you, but they cannot take away your jewels. The great robber comes, Diabolus, the old accuser of the brethren, and he fumbles for your treasures, and he takes away some of your comforts, but he cannot take away your faith. The great dogs of Hell howl at you as though they would tear you in pieces, but those dogs cannot rob you of your good part! I think I see you in that river, when the water comes even to the chin, and you are ready to say, I sink in deep mire where there is no standingbut even that black stream cannot drown your comfort! You have a hope that swims above the biggest billow! You have a song that sounds louder than the wailing of the tempest! No fatal shipwreck shall I fear, for Christ, my Treasure, is with me there, and He preserves Himself and preserves me! Having chosen the good part, which cannot be taken from me, I am safe!   
And now, dear Friends, the question comesquestion which I hope all who mean to be communicants at the Lords Table, especially will ask themselvesHave I chosen the good part? Forget religious cares! Forget ecclesiastical troubles! Forget all that you have to do for Christ, and only think of what Christ has done for you! Have you chosen Him? Can you say in the language of that hymn, which makes us so happy when we sing it   
*On Christ, the solid rock I stand,   
All other ground is sinking sand?*   
If so, come you saints, come and sit down! Be as lowly as Mary was. If there is a low place in the valley, the water is sure to run into it. And if there is a lowly heart, Grace is sure to pour in there, though it should flow nowhere else! Go and take your seat at Jesus feet. Come to the Table and sit at Jesus feet and have fellowship with Him. And oh, you that have not chosen this good part, remember that in having despised it, you have despised your own mercy! The day will come when you will wish to alter your choice. May God change it now! If there is one here who says, Oh, I wish I could have the good part! I tell you, you may have it! If there is one soul here that desires to be saved, you may be saved! Christ desires you more than you can possibly desire Him. Christ died for sinnersyou are a sinnertrust Him and you are saved! Then your sins are gone, His righteousness covers you with imperial purple and you stand an heir of Heaven, an adopted child of God   
*Oh, believe the record true,   
God has given His Son to you.*   
Trust in His blood! Trust in His merits and you shall be saved! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOHN 11:45-57.**

Lazarus had been publicly raised from the dead. A great number of persons saw the miracle and there was never any question about its having been worked.

Verses 45, 46. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him. But some of them went their way to the Pharisees and told them what things Jesus had done. We could hardly have conceived it possible that men would have been guilty of such conduct as this to go to Christs enemies and lay it as an accusation against Him, that He had raised a man from the dead!

47, 48. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What shall we do? For this Man does many miracles. If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. They pretended that if Jesus Christ gathered to Himself a great party, the Romans would take umbrage at itpounce upon the whole nation and destroy it, for fear of its revolting from under their sway. A gross lie throughout!

49, 50. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, You know nothing at all. Nor do you consider that it is expedients for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. That was his advice. You are, none of you, up to the mark. You do not handle this thing rightly. Let us kill this Man. Let Him be put to deathnot that He deserves it, but that it is expedient that it should be, lest our nation should be destroyedand this is the way that governors and kings have been accustomed to think! Not, Is it right? But, Is it expedient? And we may always pray to God that we may have a Government that will do that which is right, and not be guided by the evil direction of that which is expedient! One has well said that if the death of a righteous man would save ten thousand, yet it would be an atrocious thing that he should be put to death unwillingly for the saving of any. The right is, after all, expedient. Yet Caiaphas did not know what he said. He was speaking a great Truth of God.

51. And this spoke he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation. He did not understand his own words. He was saying a great deal more than he meant to say for it was expedientblessedly expedientthat Jesus should die willingly and of His own accord, giving Himself up to death for the sake of His people.

52, 53. And not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together to put Him to death. One bold wicked man can often sway the counsels of men who are equally bad, but more cowardly. It had not yet come to thisthat they would hurt Him to the death, but now they take counsel to do it!

54. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, but went unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with His disciples. We do not find that He worked miracles there or preached, but in a holy and devout retirement, it may be, He prepared His mind for the last great weekthe week of His Passion and His death. It is generally best for us to imitate Him in thiswhen we have some great work to dosomething that will need all the Grace that we can get, it is well to make a retreat. Get into retirement and school the heartseek to drink in fresh strength that we may be prepared for that which lies before us.

55, 56. And the Jews Passover was near at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spoke among themselves, as they stood in the Temple, What do you think, will He not come to the feast? They had heard much of Him in the country. Country people coming to town want to hear the great ministerto see the Great Prophet. So that is their question, Will He come to the feast?

57. Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where He was, he should report it, that they might take Him. They could not deny the miraclesthey could arrest and punish the Miracle Worker.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1015 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL   
NO. 1015

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 15, 1871, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**But one thing is needful.   
Luke 10:42.**

WE have no difficulty whatever in deciding what that one thing is. We are not allowed to say that it is the Savior, for He is not a thing. And we are not permitted to say that it is attention to our own salvation, for, although that would be true, it is not mentioned in the context. The one thing needful, evidently, is that which Mary chosethat good part which should not be taken away from her. Very clearly this was to sit at Jesus feet, and hear His Word. If anything is plain at all in Holy Scripture, it is most clear that this is the one thing needfulto sit at Jesus feet and hear His Word.

This and nothing less, this and nothing more. The mere posture of sitting down and listening to the Saviors Word was nothing in itselfit was that which it indicated. It indicated, in Marys case, a readiness to believe what the Savior taught, to accept and to obeyno, to delight in the Precepts which fell from His lips. And this is the one thing needful. He that has it has the spirit of Grace and life. To sit at Jesus feet implies submission. Such an one is no longer resisting His power. He has cast down the weapons of his rebellion and has come humbly to acknowledge the Redeemer as Lord and King in his soul.

This is needfulabsolutely needful. For no rebel can enter the kingdom of Heaven with the weapons of rebellion in his hands. We cannot know Christ while we resist Christwe must be reconciled to His gentle sway, and confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. To sit at Jesus feet implies faith as well as submission. Mary believed in what Jesus said, and therefore, sat there to be taught by Him. It is absolutely needful that we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christin His power as God and Man, in His death as being expiatoryin His Crucifixion as being a Sacrifice for our sins.

We must trust Him for time and for eternity in all His relationships as Prophet, Priest, and King. We must rely upon Him. He must be our hope, our salvation, our All in All. This one thing is absolutely needfulwithout it we are undone. A believing submission, and a submissive faith in Jesus we must have, or perish. But sitting at Jesus feet implies, also, that having submitted and believed, we now desire to be His disciples. Discipleship is too often forgotten. It is as needful as faith. We are to go into all the world and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

A man cannot be saved unless he becomes a learner in the school of Christ, and a learner, too, in a practical sense, being willing to practice what he learns. Only he who does the Masters will knows His doctrine.

We are, if we have chosen the good part, sitters at the feet of Jesus just as Saul of Tarsus sat at the feet of Gamaliel. Christ is to us our great Instructor, and we take the Law from His lips. The Believers position is that of a pupil, and the Lord Jesus is his Teacher. Except we are converted and become as little children, we can in no wise enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

Sitting at the feet of Jesus indicates the child-like spirit of true discipleship. And this is the one thing needfulthere is no salvation apart from it. It meant, also, service, for though Mary was not apparently engaged in waiting upon Christ as Martha was, yet she was, in very truth, ministering unto Him in a deeper and truer sense. No one gives greater joy to a public speaker than an attentive listener. No one serves a teacher better than he who is an apt and attentive scholar. The first duty, indeed, of the student to the tutor is that he be cheerful in accepting, and diligent in retaining what is taughtin this sense Mary was really waiting upon Christ in one of His loftiest capacities, namelythat of a Teacher and Prophet in the midst of Israel.

In that same spirit, had the Master only intimated it, she would have risen to wash His feet, or anoint His head, or wait at table, as Martha didbut she would, while she was performing these active dutieshave continued spiritually in her first posture. She could not, of course, have continued literally sitting at the feet of the Savior, but her heart would have remained in the condition which that posture indicates. She was in the fittest position for service, for she waited to hear what her Lord would have her to do.

We, too, must all be servants. As we have been servants of unrighteousness, we must, by Grace, submit ourselves unto the rules of Jesus and become servants of righteousness, or else we miss the one thing that is indispensable for entrance into Heaven. Sitting at the feet of Jesus, also signifies love. She would not have been sitting there at ease and happy in mind if she had not loved Him. There was a charm in the very tone of His Words to her. She knew how He had loved her, and therefore, each syllable was music to her soul! She looked up again and again, I doubt not, into that dear face, and often caught the meaning of the Words more readily as she read His countenance, marked His eyes oftentimes suffused with tears, and ever bright with holy sympathy.

Her love to His Person made her a willing learner, and we must be the same. We must not learn of Christ like unwilling truant boys who go to school and must needs have learning flogged into them. We must be eager to learn. We must open our mouth wide that He may fill it. Like the thirsty earth when it needs the shower, our soul must break for the longing it has towards His Commandments at all times. We must rejoice in His Statutes more than gold, yes, than much fine gold. When we are moved by this spirit, we have found the one thing needful.

Having laid before you the meaning of the text, that to sit at Jesus feet is the one thing needful, a literal translation of the text would beof one thing there is a necessity. Let us take the text as it stands, and notice in it four things. The first is a word of considerationthe disjunctive conjunction, but. The Savior bids us to make a pause. He says, but one thing is needful. Then there comes a word of necessityone thing is needful. Thirdly, a word of concentrationone thing is needful. And then a word of urgencyone thing is needfulneedful now, at once.

I. To begin, then, here is a word of CONSIDERATION, which, as I have already said, is interjected into the middle of our Lords brief Word to Martha. Martha is very busy. She is rather quick-tempered, also, and she speaks to the Savior somewhat shortly. And the Master says, Martha, Martha,very tenderly, kindly, gently, with only the slightest tinge of rebuke in His toneMartha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many thingsbut, but, but, wait awhile, and hear. That wise advice and warning may be very useful to many here. You are engaged today in businessvery diligent you are in it. You throw your whole energy into your trading, as you must, if you would succeed.

You rise up early, and you sit up late. Shall I say a word that should discourage your industry? I will notbut, but is there nothing else?is this life all? Is making money everything? Is wealth worth gaining merely for the sake of having it said, He died worth fifty thousand pounds? Is it so? Perhaps you are a very hard-working man. You have very little rest during the week, and in order to bring up your family comfortably, you strain every nerve. You live as you should, economically, and you work diligentlyfrom morning to night the thought with you is, How shall I fill these many little mouths? How shall I bring them up properly? How shall I, as a working man, pay my way?

Very right. I wish all working men would be equally thoughtful and economical, and that there were fewer of those foolish spendthrifts who waste their substance when they have it, and who, the moment there is a frost, or they are out of employ, become paupers, loafing upon the charity of others. I commend your industry,

but, but, but, at the same time, is that all? Were you made only to be a machine for digging holes, laying bricks, or cutting out pieces of wood? Were you created only to stand at a counter and measure or weigh out goods? Do you think your God made you for that and that only?

Is this the chief end of manto earn so many shillings a week, and try to make ends meet? Is that all immortal men were made for? As a man with a soul, capable of thought and judgment, and not a mere animal like a dog, nor a machine like a steam engine, can you stand up and look at yourself and say, I believe I am perfectly fulfilling my destiny? I beg this morning to interject that quiet but, right into the middle of your busy life, and ask from you space for consideration, a pause for the voice of Wisdom, that a hearing may be granted her. Business? Labor? Yes, but there is a higher bread to be earned, and there is a higher life to be considered!

And therefore the Lord puts it, Labor not for the meat that perishes, that is to say, not for that first and foremost, but for that which endures unto life eternal. God has made man that he may glorify Him. Whatever else man accomplishes, if he attains not to this end, his life is a disastrous failure. But a man will fail to reach that end, and make eternal shipwreck unless he comes to sit at Jesus feet. There and there only can he learn how to sanctify his business and to consecrate his labor and so bring forth unto God, through His Grace, that which is due to Him.

Now, I have spoken thus to the busy, but I might speak, and I should have certainly as good a claim to do so, to these who are lovers of pleasure. They are not cumbered with much servingrather, they laugh at those who cumber themselves about anything. They are merry as the birds. Their life is as the flight of a butterfly which lightly floats from flower to flower, according to its own sweet willwith neither comb to make, nor hive to guard. Now, you gay young men, what does Solomon say to you? Rejoice, O young man, in your youth. And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, butthere comes in a pause and the cool hand of Wisdom is laid upon the hot brow of folly, and the youth is asked to think awhilebut know you, that for all these things, God willbring you into judgment.

It cannot be that an immortal spirit was made for frivolities! A soul immortal spending all her fires on the playthings of the world, resembles ocean into tempest tossed, to waft a feather, or to drown a fly. So great a thing as an immortal soul could not have been made by God with no higher object than to spend itself upon trifles light as air! Oh, pause a while, you careless, godless one, and hear the voice that says unto you, but. There is something more than the fools laugh, all things are not a comedy! Death is serious, and Heaven and Hell. And should not life be?

The charms of music, the merriment of the gay assembly, the beauties of art, and the delights of banquetingthere must be something more for you than these. And something more must be required of you than that you should waste from morn to night your precious time upon nothing but to please yourself. Stop, stop, and let this admonitory but sound in your ears!

I take liberty, moreover, to address the same word to religious people, who, perhaps, need it as much as others. They will, of course, agree with anything I can say about the mere worldling or the profligate. But will they listen to me when I say to them, You are very diligent in your religion, you are attentive to all its outward rites and ceremonies, you believe the articles of your Church, you practice the ceremonies ordained by its rulersbut, butdo you know that all this is nothing unless you sit at Jesus feet?

We may do what the Church tells us, and never do what Christ tells us, for these may be different things. And the Church is not our Savior, but Christ. We may believe what a certain creed tells us, but not believe what Jesus teaches. For our creed and Christ may be two very different things. Yes, and we may believe even what the Bible itself teaches to us, or think we believe itbut, if our heart has never made submission to the Teacher Himself, so as to sit at His feet, and receive the Truth obediently from Himour religion is altogether vain!

Traditional religion is not submission to Christ, but to custom. Obedience to a denomination is not obedience to Jesus Himself. How I wish that all professing Christians would bring themselves to an examination, and enquire, Do I really believe in the Person of my Lord, and accept Him as my Teacher? Do I study the Word of God to learn the Truth from Him, and not accept it blindly and at second hand from my minister, or my parents, or the Church of the nation, or the creed of my family?

We go to Jesus for teaching, desiring with our hearts to be taught by His Book and His Spirit, cheerfully agreeing in all things to shape our faith to His declaration, and our life to His rule. For us, there must be no spiritual Law-giver, and no infallible Rabbi, but the Blessed One, whom Magdalene called Rabboni, and whom Thomas saluted as, My Lord and my God. Yes, and let me say even to those of you who can honestly declare that Christ is your sole confidence, it is possible for you to forget the necessity of sitting at His feet.

You, dear Brethren, are looking to His precious blood, alone, for your salvation, and His name is sweet to you, and you desire in all things to be conformed to His will. So far it is well with you, for in this you have a measure of sitting at His feet. But so had Martha. She loved her Lord, and she knew His Word, and she was a saved soul, for Jesus loved Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus. But you have not, perhaps, so much of this needful thing as Mary had, and as you ought to have. You have been very busy this week, and have drifted from your moorings. You have not lived with your Lord in conscious fellowship. You have been full of care and empty of prayer.

You have not committed your sorrows to your loving Friend. You have blundered on in duty without asking His guidance or assistance. You have not maintained, in your Christian service, the communion of your spirit with the Well-Beloved, and, if such has been the case, let me say but to you, and ask you, as you sit here this morning, to make a little stop in your Sunday school teaching or your street preaching, or whatever else it is that you are so laudably engaged in, and say to yourselfTo me, as a Worker, the one thing needful is to keep near my Lord, and I must not so suffer the watering of others to occupy me, as to neglect my own heart, lest I should have to say woe is me, they made me keeper in the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.

To the saints, as well as to others, the one thing needful is to sit at Jesus feet. We are to be always learners and lovers of Jesus. Departure from Him, and independence of Himlet them not once be named among you. It is weakness, sickness, sin, and sorrow for a Believer to leave His Lord and become either His own leader or reliance. We are only safe while we remain humbly and gladly subservient to Him. You see, then, that this word but suggests a very useful and salutary pause to us all. May God help us to benefit thereby.

II. Secondly, our text speaks of NECESSITYone thing is a necessity. If this is proven, it overrides all other considerations. We are nearly right when we say proverbially, Necessity has no law. If a man steals, and it is found that he was dying of hunger, he is always half forgiven, and charity has been known to excuse him altogether. Necessity has been frequently accepted as a good excuse for what else might not have been tolerated. And when a thing is right, and necessity backs it, then, indeed, the right becomes imperative, and pushes to the front to force its way.

Necessity, like hunger, breaks through stone walls. The text claims for sitting at Jesus feet that it is the first and only necessity. Now, I see all around me a crowd of things alluring and fascinating. Pleasure calls to me. I hear her siren songbut I reply, I cannot reward you, for necessity presses upon me to hearken to another voice. Philosophy and learning charm megladly would I yield my heart to them. But, while I am yet

unsaved, the one thing needful demands my first care, and wisdom bids me give it. Not that we love human learning less, but eternal wisdom more.

Pearls? Yes. Emeralds? Yes. But bread, in Gods namebread at once, when I am starving in the desert! What is the use of ingots of gold, or bars of silver, or cases of jewels, when food is wanting! If one thing is needful, it devours, like Aarons rod, all the matters which are merely pleasurable. All the fascinating things on earth may go, but needful things we must have. If you are wise, you will evermore prefer the needful to the dazzling. About us are a thousand things entangling. This world is very much like the pools we have heard of in India, in which grows a long grass of so clinging a character that if a man once falls into the water, it is almost certain to be his deathfor only with the utmost difficulty could he be rescued from the meshes of the deadly, weedy netwhich immediately wraps itself around him.

This world is even thus entangling. All the efforts of Grace are needed to preserve men from being ensnared with the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this life. The ledger demands you, the day-book wants you, the shop requires you, the warehouse bell rings for you. The theater invites, the ballroom callsyou must live, you say, and you must have a little enjoyment, and, consequently, you give your heart to the world.

These things, I say, are very entangling. But we must be disentangled from them, for we cannot afford to lose our souls. What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? If a ship is going down, and a passenger has his gold in a bag about him and he has upon him a costly coat, see how he acts. Off goes the garment when he knows that he cannot possibly swim with it upon him. No matter though it is lined with miniver and is made of costliest stuff, off he throws it. And, as for his bags of treasure, with many a regret he flings them down upon the deck, for his life is dearer than they. If he may but save his life, he is willing to lose all besides.

Oh, Sirs! For the one thing needful, all entangling things must be given up. You must lay aside every weight, and the sin that does so easily beset you, if by any means the one thing needful may be yours. There are many things very puzzling, and some people have a strange delight in being bewildered. It is astonishing the many letters I receive and interviews I am asked to give in order to adjust in peoples minds the doctrine of predestination and the fact of free agency. And equally remarkable is the way in which young people, and old people, too, will pick out extremely difficult texts, perhaps relating to the Second Advent, or to the battle of Armageddon. They must have these opened up to them before they will believe the Gospel!

I think it utterly useless to begin upon such things with those who are unsaved. One thing is needful, Sir, and that is by no means a puzzling matter. It is plainly thisthat you submit yourself to Jesus Christ and sit at His feet. That is needfulas for the doctrines of election and the Second Advent, they are important, but they are neither the most essential nor the most pressing. The one thing needful for a seeking soul is that it receive Jesus and become submissive to Himsitting as a disciple at His feet and as a servant doing His will. It is true there is the ninth chapter of Romans in the Bible, and a precious chapter it isbut the seeking sinner should take care to read first the third chapter of John, and till he has mastered that, he had better let Romans alone.

Go first to the business which concerns your salvation! Attend to that, and when all is right with you, then, at Jesus feet, you will be in the best possible position to learn all that can be learned of the higher mysteries and the deeper Truths of God. Moreover, there is much that is desirable, very desirabledesirable in the highest spiritual sense. But it must be second to that which is needful. If I read the experience of men who have known their own hearts and mourned before the Lord, I wish that I had as deep a sense of sin as they had. Or, if I read the story of saints who have lived the angelic life, and even here on earth have dwelt with Christ and walked the golden streets in fellowship with Him, I wish I could rise to all their heights!

But for all that, if my soul is still polluted with sin, for me the one thing needful is cleansing by the Redeemers blood! I must at once believingly yield to Jesus, for this is needful, and the desirable things will come to me afterwards, if I sit down at Jesus feet. So near the source of all good things, it will be easy to be enriched with all knowledge and Grace. But our first business is to get there, and by the Holy Spirits blessing we may come there without either the deep experience or the elevated feelings we have described. We may come just as we are, all guilty and lost, and submit ourselves to the Savior. Having done that, we are in the best position for spiritual attainmentsyes, they shall surely be ours!

Let the heart yield itself to Jesus, and all is well. When He becomes our Leader and Commander, our sole reliance and sure confidence, it is well with uswe have all that is needfuland the pledge of all that is desirable. Tell us it is a necessity, and everything else must give way necessity overrules all else. Now, why is it that sitting at Jesus feet is a necessity? It is so because it is needful for us to have our sins forgiven. But Jesus will never forgive the unhumbled rebel. If he will not take Jesus to be a Master, the sinner cannot have Him to be a Savior. As long as we rebel against Him, we cannot be saved by Him.

Submission, by repentance and faith, we must have, or our transgressions will remain upon us to our everlasting ruin. It is needful, because we must have our inbred sins overcome. But none can stay corruption in a man but Christ, who has come to destroy the work of the devil, and to save His people from their sins. Jesus, the Seed of the woman, is the only power that can crush the serpents head. Only at the feet of Jesus can the Divine power be gained which works in us holiness and sanctifies us practically. Therefore, as you must be purified or you cannot enter Heaven, you must come to Jesus feet.

Moreover, it is at the feet of Jesus that the souls ignorance is removed. And since ignorance concerning ourselves and our God must be taken from us, we must be taught of Him. God is our Light and our Salvation. Our Light first, and our Salvation in consequence. We must have the Light. The spiritually blind man cannot enter Heaven. He must have his eyes opened, and Jesus, alone, can work that miracle of Grace. Neither can we receive true Light except from Him, for He is the true Light, that lights every man that comes into the world. None are ever enlightened,

except by Him. In Him is light: all light. And the Light is the light of men.

As God is the mind of the world, he who has not God is demented. And as Christ is the Light of the world, he that believes not in Him abides in darkness even now. We must come, then, and yield ourselves unreservedly to Jesus, worshipping Him, trusting Him, and obeying Himin a word, we must sit at His feet, and hear His Wordotherwise, we shall abide in darkness and in death.

In order to enter Heaven it is needful that our nature should become like the Nature of Christ. This earth is for those who bear the image of the first Adam. But the new Heaven and the new earth are for those who bear the image of the Second Adam. We must, by some means, acquire the Nature of the Second and heavenly Adam, and this must be worked in us by regeneration, and developed by acquaintance with Him. By sitting at His feet, and beholding Him, we become changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord. If we reject the Lord Jesus as our Trust, Teacher, and Exemplar, we have no new lifewe are not new creatures in Christ, and we can never be admitted within the holy gates where those alone dwell who are fashioned after His likeness. We must, then, sit at His feet.

It is absolutely needful, and, without it, our whole life will be a complete failure. We may make money, but we shall lose our souls. We may gain honor, but shall have come short of the Glory of God. We may enjoy pleasure, but we shall forfeit the pleasures which are at Gods right hand forevermore. We may have done our country some service, but to our God, and the higher country, we shall have rendered no service, for we cannot serve God if we will not obey Christ. He that honors not the Son, honors not the Father which has sent Him.

This life is a blank, a long rebellion, to the man who submits not to Jesus, and the life forever hereafter will be darkness and confusion. As darkness itself, a land of sorrow and of weeping and of wailing, and of gnashing of teetha land of despair, upon which no star shall ever shine, or son shall ever rise. Woe, woe, woe, woe to the Godless, Christless spirit that passes across the river of death without a hope. Woe, woe, woe, woe eternally to the soul that will not sit at the feet of Jesus! He shall be trod beneath His feet in His anger, and crushed in His hot displeasure. God grant that may never be our portion.

To sit at Jesus feet is the one thing needful, then. And, Brethren, let me just say, and leave this point, it is needful to every one of you. It is not some of us who must be there, but all. The wisest must become fools to learn of Him, or fools they are. The most educated and cultured mind must submit to this further culture, or else it is nothing but a barren waste in his sight. One thing is a necessity to you all, high or low, rich or poor, queen or beggaryou must sit at Jesus feet. And all alike must accept His teaching, or you know nothing that can save you. Some things in this world are needful, after a measure, but this is needful without measureinfinitely needful is it that you sit at Jesus feet. Needful now, needful in lifeneedful in life for peace, in death for restand in eternity for bliss. This is needful always.

Many things have their use for youth. Others come not into value till old age. But one thing, the one thing that is needful for childhood, and needful for palsied ageneedful for the ruddy cheek, and the active limband needful upon the sick bed. The one thing needful in the world, and in the Churchneedful everywhere, and alwaysin the highest and most emphatic sensethe one thing is needful is to sit at Jesus feet!

III. Thus much about the necessity. The next word is CONCENTRATIONOne thing is needful. I am glad it says one thing, because a division of ends and objects is always weakening. A man cannot follow two things well. Our life-flood suffices not to fill two streams or three. There is only enough water, as it were, in our lifes brooklet, to turn one wheel. It is a great pity when a man fritters away his energies by being everything by turns, and nothing long, trying all things, and mastering nothing.

Oh Soul, it is well for you that there is only one thing in this world that is absolutely needful! Give your whole soul to that. If other things are needful in a secondary place, Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these shall be added unto you. One thing is needful, and this is well arranged, for we cannot follow two things. If Christ is one of them, we cannot follow another. Is it not written, No man can serve two masters, either he will hate the one and love the other, or cleave to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon?

Not only would it be very weakening to you to attempt to serve both, but it is absolutely impossible that you should do so. Jesus Christ is a monopolizer of human hearts. He will never accept a portion of our manhood. He bought us altogether, and He will have the whole of our personality. Christ must be everything or He will be nothing. He does not love Christ who loves anything as well as Christ. Neither does he trust Him who trusts in anything besides. Christ must reign alone. Jesus only, must be the motto of our spirits.

It is well for us, therefore, that only one thing is needful, for only one thing is possible. It is an unspeakable mercy that the one thing needful is a very simple one. Little child, you could not climb the mountain, but you can sit down at Jesus feet. You cannot understand hard doctrine, but you can love Him who said, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven. Unlearned man, you who has no time to acquire earthly lore, if the one thing needful were something that belonged only to the learned, alas for you! But if you cannot teach, it is not needful that you shouldit is only needful that you should learn.

Take the Incarnate Wisdom to be your Master, and sit as a little child at His feet to learn with all your heart. That is all He asks of you. Men will have it that they must do something to be savedthey must fret and worry like Martha, but after all the right way is to end your doing and fretting by sitting down content with Jesus doingsatisfied with His righteousness and with the merit of His precious blood. The one thing needful is very easy except to proud hearts, which cannot stoop to accept everything gratis, and to be beholden to sovereign mercy.

To the poor in spirit it is not only simple but sweet to sit at Jesus feet. I would be nothing but what He makes me. I would have nothing but what He gives me. I would ask nothing but what He promises me. I would trust in nothing but what He has done for me, and I would desire nothing but

what He has prepared for me. To sit at Jesus feet in humble submission and quiet rest, He the Master and I the little child, I the vessel waiting to be filled, and He my FullnessI the mown grass, and He the falling Few I the raindrop, and He the Sun that makes me glisten in life with diamond brilliance, and then exhales me in death to be absorbed in Him! This is All in All to me!

Let us remark that though this is only one thing, and so concentrated, yet it is also comprehensive and contains many things. Imagine not that to sit at Jesus feet is a very small, unmeaning thing. It means peace, for they who submit to Jesus find peace through His precious blood. It means holiness, for those who learn of Jesus learn no sin, but are instructed in things lovely and of good repute. It means strength, for they that sit with Jesus and feed upon Him are girded with His strength. The joy of the Lord is their strength. It means wisdom, for they that learn of the Son of God understands more than the ancients because they keep His statutes. It means zeal, for the love of Christ fires hearts that live upon it, and they that are much with Jesus become like Jesus, so that the zeal of the Lords house eats them up.

If we say that in an army the one thing needful is loyalty to the sovereign, we know what that means. For the loyal soldier will be sure to be obedient to his officers, and if attached to his queen, he will be brave in the day of battle, and do his duty well. If we said that the one thing needful in a family was love, we should not have required a small thing, for love will place husband and wife in their true position. Love will produce obedience in children, and diligence in servants. Let love permeate everything, and other virtues will grow out of it, as flowers spring from the soil.

So when we say that sitting at Jesus feet is the one thing needful, we have not uttered a mere truismit comprehends a world of blessings. And here would I address a word to the Church of God in this country at this present time. She, too, is as Martha, cumbered with much serving. It were her wisdom, and her strength if she would become more like Mary, and sit at Jesus feet. Just now we need revival. Oh that God would send it! Oh for a mighty flood of spiritual influences that would bear the stranded Churches right out into a sea of usefulness.

But how can we get revival? We shall have it, Brethren, when we commune with Christ. When the saints habitually sit at Jesus feet they will be revived, and of necessity the revival will spread from them and the hearts of sinners will be touched. There is great talk nowadays of union. The walls of the various churches are to be broken down, and the denominations are to be blended. Think not of it in such a fashion! The only union possible, or desirable, is that we all unite to sit at Jesus feet. It is not allowable that we concede one Truth of God and you another. That is not natural charity, but common treason to Christ.

We have no right to yield an atom of the Truth of God under the pretence of charity. Truth is no property of ours. We are only Gods stewards, and it behooves us to be faithful to our trust. Neither one Church nor another has any right to bate its testimony one jot, if it is true. To alter the statute book of Christ is blasphemy. True union will come when all the Churches learn of Christ, for Christ does not teach two things opposed to each other. There are not two Baptisms in the Bible. We shall not find two sets of dogmas diametrically opposite to each other. If we give up the various things that are of man, and hold fast each of us only that which is of God, we shall be united in principle and in doctrine.

And One Lord, one faith, one Baptism will once again be emblazoned upon the banners of the Church of God. Sit at Jesus feet, O Church of Christ, and true unity will come to you! We hear a great deal about the necessity of controversy. We ought to be ready to answer all that infidels object, so wise men say. Every absurdity of every fool we are to sit down and reply to, and when this labor of Hercules is accomplished, we are to begin again, for by that time new whimsies will be in mens brains, and new lies will have been begotten. Is this so? Am I to do nothing in winning souls and glorifying God, but to spend all my time in finding wind for the nostrils of the wild asses of the desert?

Well, let those who please, do itwe believe that the settlement of all controversy in the Church and for the Church would come from the Lord Himselfif we believe more fully in Him, and wait more upon Him for guidance. And if we preach the Gospel more in His own strength, and in His own Spirit. And, as for missionswe appoint our committees, we amend our plans, and suggest schemes. All very well and good. But missions will never flourish till the Church, with regard to missions, sits at Jesus feet.

She will never convert the heathen in her own way. God will give success only when we work in His way. It may be very useful to make translations, and exceedingly beneficial to keep schools. But if I read my Bible right, it is not Christs way. Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, is the Law of Jesus Christ. And when the Church everywhere, at home and abroad, takes more earnestly to preachingwhen the testimony of the Truth is perpetual and incessant, in simple language, and popular speechthen Christ the Lord will look upon the Church that, like Mary, sits at His feet, and say, You have done your part, and the blessing shall follow. Your work is done, and I will give you your reward. For us all, Beloved, saints and sinners, one thing is needfulthat we always sit, like Mary, at the Masters feet.

IV. The last word is urgency, and there is no need that we say much upon it. One thing is a necessity, a necessity not of the future only, but of today. It is not written, it shall be needful, on certain coming days, to sit at Jesus feet. But it is so now. Young man, one thing is needful to you while yet youngdo not postpone it till advanced years. Christian, it is needful for you today to have communion with Christdo not think of it as indispensable tomorrow or tonight at the communion table. It is needful now. There are dangers you can not see which can only be warded off by present and immediate fellowship with Christ. One thing is needful.

It is not that it was needful in the past, indeed it was so. But it is needful now. It was needful for me in the days of my sinfulness to submit to Christ. It is equally needful for me now. However much you advance, O Believer, you never advance beyond thiswhatever your experience, or your information, or your ripeness for gloryit is needful, still, to sit at Jesus feet. You shall never get into a higher class in the school of wisdom than is the class which Christ teaches. His is the infant class in the school, but it is the highest class, also. It is always needful, every moment needful, that we sit at Jesus feet.

It is needful, I have already said, to the sinner. Life, health and peace will come to him when he becomes a disciple of the Crucified. Would God that he might be made so this very morning! There is life in a look at the Crucified One. To depend entirely upon the sinners Savior is the sinners salvation. God bring you to His feet, dear Hearers. But, it is equally needful for the saint. Covered with the fruits of righteousness, his root must still cling to the riven rock. You must never imagine, whatever you have done or whatever you have attained, that you are to leave Marys seat still must you abide there.

It is the one thing needful for the backslider. If you have fallen ever so much, you will rise again if you come to the Master submissively and abide with Him. It was the mark of the man who had the devil cast out of him, that he was clothed and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus. It shall show that you, too, are restored when you learn of your Lord. A seat at Jesus feet is the place for all Christians to diethey shall sleep sweetly with their heads in Jesus bosomit is the place for them to live, for joy and bliss are there. Beloved, I desire for myself never again to be worried with the cares of this Church, but to take them all to my Master, and wait at His feet.

I desire not to be troubled about my preaching, nor to be cumbered about anything beneath the sun, but to leave all these, as He would have me leave them, in His hands. You who are working in the classes, in the school or anywhere else, I pray you look well to your fellowship with Jesus. You cannot slay the enemy by throwing away your sword, and nearness to Christ is your battle-ax and weapon of war. You have lost your power when you have left your Lord. One thing is needfullet the rest go.

What if we have not learning? What if we have not eloquence? If we live near to Christ we have something better than these. If we abide in Him, and He abides in us, we shall ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us. If His Word abides in us, we shall go and bring forth fruit, and our fruit shall remain. If He abides in us, we shall enjoy Heaven on earth, and be daily preparing for that eternal Heaven which is to be our portion. One thing is needful. God grant it to every one of us!Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONLuke 10.   
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #3536 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A THREEFOLD SLOGAN   
NO. 3536

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1916.   
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.   
One thing is necessary. One thing I know. One thing I do. Luke 10:44. John 9:25. Philippians 3:13.   
[The original title of this sermon was A THREEFOLD MOTTO.]

I HAVE one thing in viewone thing on which I want to rivet your attention. Forbear with me if I detain you a few minutes before announcing a text. It has been said that a man of one book is terrible in the force of his convictions. He has studied it so well, digested it so thoroughly and understands it so profoundly, that it is perilous to encounter him in controversy. No man becomes eminent in any pursuit unless he gives himself up to it with all the powers and passions of his naturebody and soul. Michelangelo had never been so great a painter if his love of art had not become so enthusiastic that he frequently did not take off his garments to sleep by the week togethernor had Handel ever been such a great musician if his ardor for celestial sounds had not led him to use the keys of his harpsichord till, by constant fingering, they became the shape of spoons. A man must have one pursuit and consecrate all his powers to one purpose if he would excel or rise to eminence among his fellows.

When streams of water divide themselves into innumerable streams, they usually create a swamp which proves dangerous to the inhabitants of the neighborhood. Could all those streams be dammed up into one channel, and made to flow in one direction, they might resolve themselves into a navigable river, bearing commerce to the ocean and enriching the people who dwelt upon its banks. To obtain one thing, one comprehensive blessing from Heaven, has been the objective of many a saintly prayer, like that of David, Unite my heart to fear Your name. The advice of Paul was, Set not your affection upon things on earth, not, your affections, as it is often misquoted. The Apostle would have all the affections tied up into one affectionand that one concentrated affection not set upon earthly thingsbut upon things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God! The concurrence of all our powers and capacities with one single impulse, to obtain one objective and to produce one result, is one great aim of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!   
The one thing concerning which I am now about to talk very seriously to you will require three texts to elucidate it. There are three pithy passages of Holy Scripture which I shall endeavor to press home on your heart and conscience.

I. ONE THING NECESSARY.   
Our first text is to be found in the Gospel according to Luke 10:44, One thing is necessary. This one thing, according to this passage, is faith in Christ Jesus, the sitting down at the Masters feet, the drinking in of His Word. If I may expand for a minute the one thing, without seeming to make 20 things of that which is but one, I will refer it to the possession of a new life. This life is given to us when, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are created anew in Christ Jesus. And it develops itself in a simple confidence in Jesus, in a hearty obedience to Jesus, in a desire to be like Jesus and in a constant yearning to be near to Jesus. One thing is necessarythat one thing is salvationworked in us by the Holy Spirit, through faith which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. The new heart, the right spirit, a filial fear of God, love to Jesusthis is the one thing necessary. How I trust you all know how to distinguish things essential from things convenient, and that you are more concerned about necessary things than about things merely attractive, or, at most, but an accessory to your welfare! The little child may admire the field which is covered with red and blue flowers. The farmer cares nothing for these flowershe delights in the wheat that is ripening for the sickle. So our childish minds are often fascinated with the flaunting flowers of fortune and fashioncraving after wealth, fame and worldly distinctionbut our better reason, if it is allowed to speak, will prefer the necessary things, the things which we must have, or else must perish. We may do without earthly goods, for thousands have been happy in life and triumphant in death without any of the luxury which riches can purchase. The hearts love of his fellow creatures has been fairly won by many a humble man who never courted popular applause. The patience of the poor has often counted for fine gold, while the pride of the affluent has passed for nothing but foul dross. Even lack of health, Heavens priceless blessing to mortals here below, has not hindered some precious sufferers from serving their generation, glorifying God in a martyrdom of pain and bequeathing treasures of piety to a grateful posterity. Ten thousand things are convenient. Thousands of things are desirable. Hundreds of things are to be sought for, but there is one thing, only one thing, the one thing we have described to you, of which our Savior speaks as the one thing necessary.   
And, oh, how necessary it is! Necessary for your childrenthey are growing up about you and much joy they give youfor you can see in them many budding excellences. To your partial eyes they give promise of goodness, if not of greatness! They will be the comfort of your declining years. You have carefully watched their education. Not a whit of their moral habits have you failed to overlook. To give them a fair start in the world has been your fond desire till their portion is the fruit of your providence. From perils you would protect them. Lest they should have to rough it, perhaps, as much as their father before them, you would pilot them through the straits. Good! But, dear parents, do remember that one thing is necessary for your children, that they may commence life, continue in life and close life honorably. It is well that they should be educated. It is well that morality should be instilled into them, but this is not enough! Alas, we have seen many leave the purest parental influences to plunge into the foulest sins! Their education has become but a tool for iniquity, and the money with which they might have helped themselves to competence has been squandered away in vice. One thing is necessary for that bright-eyed boy! Oh, if you can take him to the Savior, and if the blessing of the Good Shepherd shall alight upon him and renew him while yet a child, the best will have been done for himyes, his one chief need supplied! And if that dear girl, before she comes to womanhood, shall have been led to that blessed Savior who rejects none that come to Him, she will have received all she shall need for time and for eternity! Quicken your prayers, then, dear parents. Think of your children, to seek their welfare more intelligently. Be more importunate in intercession on their behalf! Truly, this is the one thing necessary for them.   
One thing, too, is necessary for that young man just leaving home to go out as an apprentice and learn his trade. That is a trying time for an untried hand. The heart may well flutter as one, young and inexperienced, reflects that he is now about to sail, not on a coasting voyage, but to put fairly out to sea. Before long it will be seen whether those fair professions had the Truths of God as a foundation. He will get to Londonmany of you have passed through this ordeal! The Metropolis, what a maze it seemed to you at first, and with what amazement you surveyed it! What with propensities within your breast, and profuse attractions outsidetemptation held you spell-bound! What could not be done in the villagewhat you dared not think of in the little market town, seems easy to be done unobserved in the great city! Hundreds of fingers point you to the haunts of pleasure, the home of vice, the path to Hell! Ah, mother and father, you present the Bible as your parting gift. You write the youths name on the flyleaf. You offer your prayers and you shed your tears for him. Steals there not over you the conviction that the one thing he needs you cannot pack in his trunk, nor can you send it up to him by a post office order? The one thing necessary is that Christ should be formed in his heart the hope of glory! With that he would begin life well. A sword of the true Jerusalem metal, that will not break in the heat of the conflict, will be serviceable all his journey through. Do I address some young man who has not forgotten his mothers kind remarks when he left home? Let me just echo them, and say to him, One thing you lack! Oh, seek it, seek it now! Before going out of this house, seek till, through Grace, you obtain this one thing necessary which shall bear you safely to the skies!   
But one thing is necessary, not merely for those youngsters at home, or for those about to go abroad in the world. One thing is necessary for the business man. Ah, he says, I need a great many things. But what, I ask, is the one thing? You speak of the necessary. You call ready cash the indispensable. Give me this, says the man of the world, and I dont care about anything else! Recommend your religion to whom you please, but let me have solid gold and silver, and I will be well content. Ah, Sirs, you delude yourselves with phantoms! You fondly dream that wealth in your hands would count for more than it has ever done for your fellows. You must have seen some men make large fortunes whom you knew to be very miserable. They have retired from business to get a little rest, and yet they could find no rest in their retirement! You must have known others who, the more they got, the more they have wanted, for they have swallowed a horseleech, and it has cried, Give, give! Of course, you never suspected that the money did the mischief, or that the precious metal poisoned the heart. But are you in quest of happiness? It lies not in investments, whether in government bonds or mortgages, or stocks or debentures, or gold or silver. These properties are profitable. They can be used to promote happiness. As accessories to our welfare, they may often prove to be blessings, but if accredited with intrinsic worth they will eat as does a canker! Money circulated is a medium of public benefit, while money hoarded is a means of private discomfort! A man is but a muckraker who is forever seeking to scrape everything to himself. A miser is bound to be miserable. Before high Heaven, he is an object to make the angels weep! One thing is necessary for you merchants, brokers and warehousemen to keep you from sinking under your anxieties and losses, or to preserve you from becoming sordid and selfish through your successes and lest your greed should increase with your gains! One thing is necessary that your life may be a true life, or else, when it comes to its end, all that can be said of you will amount to this, He died worth so much. Must that be your only memorial? When you depart from this world, the poor and needy will not miss you. Widow and orphans will not grieve for you! The Church militant will not mourn! The bright spirits above will not be waiting to greet you. The grand climax of your careera will! A testament sworn under a very large sum! What shall it profit any man what fortune he may have amassed, if he loses his soul?

Do you think that riches possessed in this world will procure any respect in the nether regions? I have heard that in the old Fleet Prison, the thief who was put into jail for stealing ten thousand pounds thought himself a gentleman in comparison with those common fellows who were put in for some paltry debt of 20 or 25 pounds! There are no such distinctions in Hell! You who can boast your talents of gold and talents of silver, if cast away, shall be as complete wrecks as those who never had copper or sliver, but lived and died in privation and poverty! You need one thing, and if you get this one thing, your wealth shall prove a blessingotherwise it will be a curse! With this one thing your sufficiency for the day guaranteed to you by promise shall make you as one of Heavens favorites, fed by the hand of God, always needy, but never neglected. You aged folkthere are some such hereshall I have to remind any of you that one thing is necessaryyes, most necessary to you? Death has already put his bony palm upon your head and frozen your hair to the whiteness of that winter in which all your strength must fail, and all your beauty fade. Oh, if you have no Savior! You will soon have to quit these transitory scenes. The young may die, but the old must. To die without a Savior will be dreary and dreadful! Then, after death, the judgment! Brave old man, how will your courage stand that outlook, if you have none to plead your cause? Oh, aged woman, you will soon be in the scalesvery soon must your character be weighed. If it is said of you, Tekel, she is weighed in the balances and found wanting, there will be no opportunity to get right or adjust your relations to God or to your fellow creatures. Your lamp will have gone out. There will be no chance of rekindling it! If lost, forever lostforever in the darkforever cast away! Little enough will it avail you, then, that you have nourished and brought up children. It will not suffice you, then, that you paid your debts honestly. Vain the plea that you attended a place of worship and were always respected in the neighborhood! ONE THING is necessary! Lacking that, you will turn out to have been a fool! Notwithstanding many opportunities and repeated invitations, you have rejected the one thingthe one only thingwhat an irreparable mistake! Oh, how you will weep as one disappointed! How you will gnash your teeth as do those who upbraid themselves! You will mourn forever, and your self-reproach shall know no end!   
I wish I could move you, as I desire, to feel as I feel, myselfthat this one thing is necessary to every unconverted person here present. Some of you have already got this one choice thing that is so necessary. Hold it fast! Never let it go! Grace gave it to youDivine Grace will keep it for youGrace will hold you true to it. Never be ashamed of it. Prize it beyond all cost! But as for you who have it notI think I hear your funeral knell pealing in my ears, and as you speed away, your spirits made to fly for very fear, right into the arms of Justice, I think I hear your bitter cry, The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved! I would gladly pluck you by the skirts, if I could, and say to you, Why not seek the one thing necessary without more ado? Get it now! It will not in any way hurt you. It will make you happy, here, and blessed hereafter. It is as necessary for this life as for the next, as necessary for the exchange as for the sick chamber, as necessary for the street and for the shop as for the dying bed and for the Day of Judgment. One thing one thing is necessary! And now allow me to stop before taking you a stage further. Allow me, as it were, to change horses. I must take another text   
II. ONE THING KNOWN.   
It is in the Gospel according to John, the 9th Chapter, and the 25th verse, and these are the words, One thing I know.   
The man who was born blind, whose eyes were opened at the pool of Siloam, said, One thing I know. This simple statement I want to turn into a pointed question. Among the many things, dear Friends, that you are acquainted with, do you know the one thing that this poor man knew, Whereas I was blind, now I see? Here is a wealth of selfknowledge in this single avowal. Little enough, I daresay, he knew about other people, but he knew a great deal about himself! He was well aware that he once was blindand he was quite positive that he now could see. Oh, can you say it with sincerity, I know that I was once blindI could see no beauty in Christ, though I thought I saw great beauties in the world. Then I could not love God. I did not hate sin. I had no repentance, nor had I any faith. I was blind, but nowoh, blessed changenow I see my sin and weep over it! Now I see a Savior, and I trust Him! Now I see His beauties and I admire Him! Now I see His service and I delight to spend my strength in it! One thing I know. What a marvelous experience of a marvelous change this implies! Nor can its importance be overrated. There is no going to Heaven unless you undergo a change which shall make you entirely new and make all things entirely new to you. A young convert once said, I do not know what is happeningeither the world is changed, or else I am, for nothing seems to me to be the same as once it was. Ah, this old Bible, what a dry Book it used to be, but, oh, how it abounds in marrow and fatness now! Prayerwhat a tedious duty, once, but what a delightful exercise now! The going up to Gods House on the Sabbathused it not to be a weariness of the flesh? How much better to be in the fields! Yet now, how delightful we feel, to assemble with the Lords saints! With what pleasure we hail the festal morn! All things are altered. Behold, all things are become new! What we once hated, we love, and what we loved, we hate! Is it so, dear Heareris it so with you?   
Do not, I pray you, be content with mere reformation. Were you before a drunk, and are you now a teetotaler? Goodvery good! Yet, good as it is, it will not save your soul! Dishonest and knavish you once were, but truthful and trustworthy you may now beyet rely not upon it for salvation! In former days, unchasteby stern resolve you may have given up the favorite lustbut even that will not save you! Those who never fell into your foul sloughs need the change, too. You must be born-again. You must have an entire renewala radical change! It is not cutting off the limbs of a tree, nor shifting it to another place, that will convert a bramble into a vine. The sap must be changed. The heart must be renewed. The inner man must be made completely new. Is it so with you? Why, I think if some of us were to meet our old selves walking down the street, we would hardly know ourselves! Tis true, old self has taken good care to knock at our door pretty often since. Of all the knocks we hear, not even excepting that of the devil, there is none we dread so much! The knock of the old man when he says, Let me in with my corruptions and lusts, and let me reign and have my own way. No, old man, you were once ourselves, but go your way, for we have put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new manwe cannot know you, for one thing we know now that we knew not beforewhereas we were blind, now we see!   
Need I linger any longer upon this point? Let it suffice if I leave it as a kind of awakening question upon the heart and conscience. There are not 20 things, but there is ONE THING you have to enquire about. Do you know for sure this one thingthat you are not now what you used to be? Do you know that Jesus has made the difference? That Jesus has opened the eyes that were once without sight? That you now see Jesus, and seeing, you love Him? Our third subject is   
III. ONE THING DONE.   
The text is in the 3rd Chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, at the 13th verse. There the Apostle Paul says, One thing I do.   
Pray observe that I did not introduce doing first. That would not be appropriate. We do not begin with doing. The one thing necessary is not doing. Coming to Christ and trusting Him, must take the lead. Not until after you have got the one thing necessary, and know that you have got it, and are conscious that, whereas you were blind, now you see, can you be fit to take the next stepone thing I do. And what is that one thing? Forgetting the 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. It seems, then, that the Apostle gave his whole mind up to the glorifying of God by his spiritual life. He was never content with what he was. If he had a little faith, he sought for more. If he had a little hope, he aimed to obtain more. If he had some degree of virtue, he coveted more. Oh, Christians, never be satisfied with being merely saved! Up with you! Away! Off! Go onward to the high mountains, to the clearer light, to the brighter joy! If saved and brought, like the shipwrecked mariner, to shoreis that enough? Yes, for the moment it is enough to guarantee the purest satisfaction and the warmest congratulations. But the mariner must seek a livelihood as long as he lives. He must put forth his energies. Whatever avocations open up before him, he must vigorously seek such favors of fortune as may possibly be within his reach. Just so, let it be with you. Saved from the deep which threatened to swallow you up, rejoice that you are preserved from death, but resolve that the life vouchsafed to you shall be active, earnest, vigorous, fruitful in every good deed and work! Be diligent as your traders are! See how they wake their servants up in the morning, how they scold them if they are not diligent. This man must be hurried to one place, and that man to another. How sharp they speak! How quickly they move about! They will do their business and they spare no pains to increase it. Oh, that we were half as diligent in the service of God! Here we are driveling away our time. We do not put out all our talents, augment our faith, or enlarge our coast. Why are we so indolent in going to that great giver of every good and perfect gift for fresh supplies? Why do we not wait upon Him to be enriched? Would to God that we were as diligent in spiritual as we are in temporal things! Oh, that we were burning with a holy covetousness for the best gifts God can bestow and the choicest blessings saints can receive!

Paul was anxious to do more good, to get more good, to be more good. He sought to win souls. He needed to make Christs name known. An ardent passion inflamed him! A high enthusiasm inspired him. Tentmaking, it is true, was his trade, but tent-making did not monopolize quite all his heart, and soul, and strength! Does your secular vocation absorb all your thoughts? Though Paul was proud of his industry, and could say conscientiously, My own hands have ministered to my necessities, yet preaching was the one thing he pursued as his life-work. He was a workman, just as many of you arebut where were his tools? They were ready to hand when he needed them. And did they, do you think, ever creep up into his heart? I believe never. For us to live, said he, is Christ. That was as true, I will guarantee you, when he was tentmaking, or picking up sticks on the island of Malta, as when he was talking heavenly wisdom to the worldly-wise, addressing the Athenians on Mars Hill or when he discoursed touching the resurrection of the dead to the Jews, or when he expounded the way of justification to the Gentiles! He was a man of one idea, and that one idea had entirely possessed him! In the old pictures they put a halo around the head of the saints. But, in fact, that halo encircles their hearts and penetrates every member of their bodies. The halo of disinterested consecration to Christ should not be about their brows, alone, to adorn their portraits, for it encompassed their entire being, their spirit, soul and body! It environed them, their whole being. This one thing I do, was the slogan of early saints. Let it be your slogan!   
Beloved, I address you as the saints of this generation. My earnest desire is that you should not come behind in Grace or in gifts. When the Believers of all ages muster, and are marshaled, may you be found among the faithful and true. If not among the first or second class of worthies in the army of the Son of David, yet good soldiers of Jesus Christ! Our God is a loving Father. He likes to praise His people. To this end do be clear about the one thing you need, the one thing you know, and the one thing you do! So will you stand well in that day. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOHN 9.**

Verses l-3. And as Jesus passed by He saw a man who was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. We are not to look upon such afflictions as any indication of special sin on the part either of the person or the parent. Of course, sin lies at the root of all our suffering as a great generic fact, but not so that we may attribute such an affliction to any one sin. The disciples, you see, dear Friends, are thinking about difficult problems. Their Master is thinking about how, practically, to meet the difficulty, and to this day there are a large number of Christians, professors and even ministers who occupy their time about questions which really are to no profit. If they could be answered, nobody would be the holier or the better! What does it matter to us what is the origin of evil? Far more important to turn the evil out than it is to find out how it came in! Very frequently, you know, after there is a terrible calamity or accident, we have an inquiry as to how it was done, and then we think the thing is all attended to. It would have been better, perhaps, to have an inquiry, before it was done, as to how it could be prevented. Our Lord has that wisdom that practicalness. He begins to deal with the evil rather than to raise questions about it. Yes, and He sees in that evil a good coming out of it! He says that this man was blind, that the works of God might be made manifest in him.

4-7. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. Our Lord used instrumentality. It did not appear, however, to be very likely to achieve His purpose. The clay seemed more likely to blind than to give sight, yet if the Lord chooses to use the poor and weak instruments that seem nothing better than dust and spittle, He has the glory of the grand result! If He takes the humble ministry of His servants and uses it in the pulpit, or in the Sunday school, or anywhere else, He has all the more Glory and is the less likely to be robbed of it because He uses such unlikely means.

8, 9. The neighbors therefore, and they who before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is heWe are sure of it.

9. Others said, He is like heThey were cautious bodies.   
9. But he said, I am he. He knew there was no mistaking his witness!   
10, 11. Therefore said they unto him, How were your eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. Very straightforward, very concise, very accurateand when we make answer about our conversion, it is always well to take this for a copynot too many flourishes, no coloring. He even leaves out about the spittle, but he gives it all as he can recollect it. So when you are talking about the Lords love to you and His way of converting you, it is quite sufficiently remarkable, without any touch of rouge. Let it be given just as it is.   
12. Then said they unto him, Where is He? He said I do not know. Enough for him to know what he did knowthat his eyes were opened and how it was done! So sometimes I have known persons come upon the new convert with a question which has rather baffled him, and he has been troubled because he could not answer it. Do not let it trouble you! You are not expected to know everything. The very best and most honest thing is to say, I do not know   
13-14. They brought to the Pharisees him that before was blind. And it was the Sabbath Day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. So you may be sure that the Pharisees would be down upon Him for that, because, according to the Rabbis, the making of the clay to put upon this mans eyes would be a kind of brick-makingand they would bring Him in guilty of brick-making directly! So did these men pervert things and make men guilty where no offense had been committed whatever.   
15. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed, and do see. He is shorter with them. Some tales grow in telling. His gets shorter. Besides, he has to deal with captious peopleand then the least said, the sooner mendedand this shrewd man thought so.   
16, 17. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This Man is not of God, because He keeps not the Sabbath. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They said unto the blind man, again, What say you of Him, that He has opened your eyes? He said, He is a Prophet. He could see that.   
18-24. But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How, then, does he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind. But by what means he now sees, we know not; he is of age; ask him. He shall speak for himself. These words spoke his parents because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already that if any man did confess that he was the Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this Man is a sinner. How piously these Pharisees can talkand generally in the name of God, all sorts of mischief begins. When men are persecuting the Son of God, yet still they take the name of God upon their lips. Did they not burn the martyrs to the glory of God? Oh, yes, and so did these men thus slander Christ by saying, We know that this Man is a sinner, and yet they spoke about giving God praise!   
25. HeOur shrewd friend of the opened eyes.   
25-27. Answered and said, Whether He is a sinner or not, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and you did not hear: therefore would you hear it again? Will you also be His disciples? The man is sharp, acute, cutting.   
28, 29. Then they reviled him and said, You are His disciple; but we are Moses disciples. We know that God spoke unto Moses: as for this Fellow, we know not from where He comes. The word, fellow, is supplied by the translators. There is no such word there because they did not know a word bad enough with which to express their scorn.   
30-33. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvelous thing, that you know not from where He comes and yet He has opened my eyes. Now we know that God hears not sinners: but if any man is a worshipper of God, and does His will, him He hears. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this Man were not of God, He could do nothing. He proves! He administrates! The thing is as clear as possible, and yet they refuse to see it.   
34. They answered and said unto him, You were altogether born in sins. It is the old rule, Abuse the plaintiff. Nothing could be said. Now abuse the man! He has answered you and his arguments are too difficult for you. Now throw hard words at him. You were altogether born in sins.

34. And do you teach us? Wonderful, that, us. Do you teach us? Folly, ignorance and pride go together. This man, in the simplest and most unaffected manner, had told his tale and urged his argumentand now they abuse him and exalt themselves. Do you teach us? No, great Pharisees, he does not teach you, for you will not learn!   
34. And they cast him out. That is the last argument. Out with him! Now we have defeated him.   
35. Jesus heard that they had cast him out: and when He had found him. What a blessed thing to be cast out, if Christ finds us! Many and many have been put out of the synagogue and treated with contempt, but then outside Jerusalem they found their Lord, for there He died outside the camp, and His people need not be ashamed to go after Him bearing His reproach. When He had found him.   
35-38. He said unto him, Do you believe in the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe in Him? And Jesus said unto him, You have both seen Him, and it is He who is talking with you. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him. He does not appear to have been a Unitarian, therefore, and if those persons had their eyes opened, they would do the same. He said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.   
39. And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. Christ is the turner of the tables. Did not the virgin mother sing, He has put down the mighty from their seats, and He has exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent away empty? So He always does.   
40. Jesus said unto them, If you were blindReally could not see.   
41. You would have no sin. If you really did not know better, were totally and altogether without knowledgethen you would have no sin compared with what you now have.   
41. But now you say, We see; therefore your sin remains. You acknowledge that you have sinned with your eyes open and, therefore, your sin is all the greater.

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 #1091 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

PRAYER CERTIFIED OF SUCCESS   
NO. 1091

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 19, 1873, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.   
For everyone that asks receives and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.   
Luke 11:9-10.**

To seek aid in time of distress from a supernatural being is an instinct of human nature. We say not that human nature unrenewed ever offers truly spiritual prayer, or ever exercises saving faith in the living God. But still, like a child crying in the dark with painful longing for help from somewhere or other, it scarcely knows where, the soul in deep sorrow almost invariably cries to some supernatural being for succor. None have been more ready to pray in time of trouble than those who have ridiculed prayer in their prosperityand probably no prayers have been more true to the feelings of the hour than those which atheists have offered under the pressure of the fear of death.

In one of his papers in the Tattler, Addison describes a man, who, on board ship, loudly boasted of his atheism. A brisk gale springing up, he fell upon his knees and confessed to the chaplain that he had been an atheist. The common seamen who had never heard the word before, thought it had been some strange fish, but were more surprised when they saw it was a man and learned out of his own mouth, that he never believed till that day that there was a God. One of the old sailors whispered to the boatswain that it would be a good deed to heave him overboard, but this was a cruel suggestion, for the poor creature was already in misery enoughhis atheism had evaporated and he, in mortal terror, cried to God to have mercy upon him!

Similar incidents have occurred, not once nor twice. Indeed, so frequently does boastful skepticism come down with a run at the last that we always expect it to do so. Take away unnatural restraint from the mind and it may be said of all men that, like the comrades of Jonah, they cry, every man, unto his God in their trouble. As birds to their nests, hinds to their coverts, so men in agony fly to a superior being for succor in the hour of need. God has given to all the creatures He has made some peculiar form of strengthone has such swiftness of foot that at the baying of a hound it escapes from danger by outstripping the wind. Another, with outspread wings, is lifted beyond the fowler. A third, with horns, pushes down its enemy and a fourth, with tooth and claw, tears in pieces its adversary.

To man He gave but little strength compared with the animals among which He placed in Eden and yet man was king over all because the Lord was His strength. So long as he knew where to look for the source of his power, man remained the unresisted monarch of all around him. That image of God in which he shone resplendent sustained his sovereignty over the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field and the fish of the sea. By instinct man turned to his God in Paradise and now, though he is, to a sad degree, an uncrowned monarch, there lingers in his memory shadows of what he was and remembrances of where his strength must still be found. Therefore, no matter where you find a man, you meet one who, in his distress, will ask for supernatural help.

I believe in the truthfulness of this instinct and that man prays because there is something in prayer. And when the Creator gives His creature the power of thirst, it is because water exists to meet its thirstand as when He creates hunger there is food to correspond to the appetite. So when He inclines men to pray it is because prayer has a corresponding blessing connected with it. We find a powerful reason for expecting prayer to be effectual in the fact that it is an institution of God. In Gods Word we are over and over again commanded to pray. Gods institutions are not folly. Can I believe that the infinitely wise God has ordained for me an exercise which is ineffectual and is no more than childs play?

Does He bid me pray and yet has prayer no more result than if I whistled to the wind, or sang to a grove of trees? If there is no answer to prayer, prayer is a monstrous absurdity and God is the Author of it which it is blasphemy to assert! No man who is not a fool will continue to pray when you have once proved to him that prayer has no effect with God and never receives an answer. Prayer is a work for idiots and madmen, and not for sane persons, if it is, indeed, true, that its effects end with the man who prays! I shall not, this morning, enter into any arguments upon the matterrather, I am coming to my text, which to me, at least, and to you who are followers of Christ, is the end of all controversy.

Our Savior knew right well that many difficulties would arise in connection with prayer which might tend to stagger His disciples and therefore He has balanced every opposition by an overwhelming assurance. Read those words, I say unto you, Iyour Teacher, your Master, your Lord, your Savior, your GodI say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. In the text our Lord meets all difficulties first by giving us the weight of His own authority, I say unto you. Next by presenting us with a promise, Ask, and it shall be given you, and so on. And then by reminding us of an indisputable facteveryone that asks receives. Here are three mortal wounds for a Christians doubts as to prayer.

I. First, then, OUR SAVIOR GIVES TO US THE WEIGHT OF HIS OWN AUTHORITY, I say unto you. The first mark of a follower of Christ is that he believes his Lord. We do not follow the Lord at all if we raise any questions upon points whereupon He speaks positively. Though a doctrine should be surrounded with 10,000 difficulties, the ipse dixit of the Lord Jesus sweeps them all away, so far as true Christians are concerned. Our Masters declaration is all the argument we need. I say unto you, is our logic. Reason? We see you at your best in Jesus, for He is made of God unto us Wisdom. He cannot err, He cannot lie and if He says, I say unto you, that is the end of all debate.

But, Brothers and Sisters, there are certain reasons which should lead us the more confidently to rest in our Masters Word upon this point. There is power in every Word of the Lord Jesus, but there is special force in the utterance before us. It has been objected to prayer that it is not possible that it should be answered because the laws of Nature are unalterable and they must and will go on whether men pray or not. Not a drop of water will change its position in a single wave, or a particle of infectious matter be turned from its course though all the saints in the universe should plead against tempest and plague.

Now, concerning that matter, we are in no hurry to make an answer our adversaries have more to prove than we haveand among the rest they have to prove a negative. To us it does not seem necessary to prove that the laws of Nature are disturbed. God can work miracles and He may work them yet again as He has done in days of yore, but it is no part of the Christian faith that God must work miracles in order to answer the prayers of His servants. When a man, in order to fulfill a promise, has to disarrange all his affairs and, so to speak, to stop all his machinery, it proves that he is but a man and that his wisdom and power are limited. But He is God, indeed, who, without reversing the engine or removing a single cog from a wheel, fulfils the desires of His people as they come up before Him!

The Lord is so Omnipotent that He can work results tantamount to miracles without, in the slightest degree, suspending any of His laws. He did, as it were, in the olden times, stop the machinery of the universe to answer prayer, but now, with equally godlike glory, He orders events so as to answer believing prayers and yet suspends no natural law. But this is far from being our only or our main comfortthat lies in the fact that we hear the voice of One who is competent to speak upon the matter and He says, I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you. Whether the laws of nature are reversible or irreversible, Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find.

Now, who is He that speaks thus? It is he that made all things, without whom was not anything made that was made! Cannot He speak to this point? O You eternal Word, You who were in the beginning with God, balancing the clouds and fastening the foundations of the earth, You know what the laws and the unalterable constitutions of Nature may be and if you say, Ask and it shall be given you, then assuredly it will be so, be the laws of Nature what they may! Besides, our Lord is by us adored as the Sustainer of all things and, seeing that all the laws of Nature are only operative through His power and are sustained in their motion by His might, He must be cognizant of the motion of all the forces in the world

and if He says, Ask and it shall be given youHe does not speak in ignorance, but knows what He affirms. We may be assured that there are no forces which can prevent the of the Lords own Word. From the Creator and the Sustainer the Words, I say unto you, settles all controversy forever.

But another objection has been raised which is very ancient, indeed, and has a great appearance of force. It is raised not so much by skeptics, as by those who hold a part of the Truth. It is thisthat prayer can certainly produce no result because the decrees of God have settled everything and those decrees are Immutable. Now we have no desire to deny the assertion that the decrees of God have settled all events. It is our full belief that God has foreknown and predestinated everything that happens in Heaven above or in the earth beneathand that the foreknown station of a reed by the river is as fixed as the station of a kingand the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as the stars in their courses. Predestination embraces the great and the little, and reaches unto all thingsthe question is, why do we pray?

Might it not as logically be asked why we breathe, eat, move, or do anything? We have an answer which satisfies us, namely, that our prayers are in the predestination and that God has as much ordained His peoples prayers as anything else. And when we pray we are producing links in the chain of ordained facts! Destiny decrees that I should prayI pray. Destiny decrees that I shall be answered and the answer comes to me. Moreover, in other matters we never regulate our actions by the unknown decrees of God, as, for instance, a man never questions whether he shall eat or drink because it may or may not be decreed that he shall eat or drink a man never enquires whether he shall work or not on the ground that it is decreed how much he shall do or how little. As it is inconsistent with common sense to make the secret decrees of God a guide to us in our general conduct, so we feel it should be in reference to prayer and therefore we still pray.

But we have a better answer than all this. Our Lord Jesus Christ comes forward and He says to us this morning, My dear Children, the decrees of God need not trouble you. There is nothing in them inconsistent with your prayers being heard. I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you. Now, who is He that says this? Why it is He that has been with the Father from the beginningthe same was in the beginning with Godand He knows what the purposes of the Father are and what the heart of God is, for He has told us in another place, the Father Himself loves you. Now, since He knows the decrees of the Father and the heart of the Father, He can tell us with the absolute certainty of an eyewitness that there is nothing in the eternal purposes in conflict with this Truth of God, that he that asks, receives, and he that seeks finds. He has read the decrees from beginning to endhas He not taken the Book and loosed the seven seals thereof and declared the ordinances of Heaven?

He tells you there is nothing there inconsistent with your bended knee and streaming eyes and with the Fathers opening the windows of Heaven to shower upon you the blessings which you seek. Moreover, He is Himself Godthe purposes of Heaven are His own purposes and He who ordained the purpose here gives the assurance that there is nothing in it to prevent the efficacy of prayer. I say unto you. O you that believe in Him, your doubts are scattered to the windsyou know that He hears prayer!

But sometimes there arises in our mind a third difficulty which is associated with our own judgment of ourselves and our estimate of God. We feel that God is very great and we tremble in the Presence of His majesty. We feel that we are very little and that, in addition, we are also vileand it seems an incredible thing that such guilty nothings should have power to move the arm which moves the world! I wonder not if that fear should often hamper us in prayer. But Jesus answers it so sweetly. He saysI say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you. And I ask again, who is it that says, I say unto you? Why, it is He who knows both the greatness of God and the weakness of man! He is God and out of the excellent Majesty I think I hear Him say, I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you.

But He is also Man, like ourselves, and He says, Dread not your littleness, for I, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, assure you that God hears mans prayer. The words come to us with the harmony of blended notes! The God, the Man, both speak to usDread not My majesty, your prayer is heard. Fear not your own weakness. I as a Man have been heard of God. And yet, again, if the dread of sin should haunt us and our own sorrow should depress us, I would remind you that Jesus Christ, when He says, I say unto you, gives us the authority, not only of His Person, but of His experience. Jesus was known to pray. Never any prayed as He did! Nights were spent in prayer by Him, and whole days in earnest intercessionand He says to us, I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you.

I think I see Him coming fresh from the heather of the hills, among which He had knelt all night to pray, and He says, My disciples, Ask, and it shall be given you, for I have prayed and it has been given unto Me. I think I hear Him say it with His face all bloody red and His garments as if He had trod the wine vat, as He rises from Gethsemane with His soul exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. He was heard in that He feared and therefore He says to us, I say unto you, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Yes, and I think I hear Him speak thus from the Cross, with His face bright with the first beam of sunlight after He had borne our sins in His own body on the treeand had suffered all our griefs to the last pang. He had cried, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me, and now, having received an answer, He cries in triumph, It is finished, and in so doing, bids us, also, ask, and it shall be given you. Jesus has proven the power of prayer!

Oh but, says one, He has not proven what it is to pray in trouble like mine. How grossly you attest the Saviors trouble was worse than yours! There are no depths so deep that He has not dived to the bottom of them!

Christ has prayed out of the lowest dungeon and out of the most horrible pit. Yes, but He has not cried under the burden of sin. How can you speak so thoughtlessly!? Was ever such a burden of sin borne by any man as was laid on Him? True, the sins were not His own, but they were sins and sins with all their crushing weight in them, too! Yet was He heard and He was helped unto the end. Christ gives you, in His own experience, the Divine proof that the asking shall be followed by the receiving, even when sin lies at the door.

Thus much is certain, if you, who are Believers, cannot believe in the efficacy of prayer on the very Word of Christ, it has come to a strange pass, for, O Beloved, you are leaning all your souls weight on Jesus! If He is not true, then you are trusting a false Savior! If He speaks not Truths of God, then you are deceived! If you can trust Him with your soul, you must of necessity trust Him with your prayers! Remember, too, that if Jesus our Lord could speak so positively here, there is a yet greater reason for believing Him now, for He has gone within the veilHe sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, and the voice does not come to us from the Man of poverty, wearing a garment without seam, but from the enthroned Priest with the golden girdle about His loins, for it is He who now says, from the right hand of GodI say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you.

Do you believe in His name? How, then, can a prayer that is sincerely offered in that name fall to the ground? When you present your petition in Jesus name, a part of His authority clothes your prayers. If your prayer are rejected, Christ is dishonoredsurely, you cannot believe that? You have trusted Him, then believe that prayer offered through Him must and shall win the day. We cannot talk longer on this point, but we trust the Holy Spirit will impress it upon all our hearts.

II. We will now remember that OUR LORD PRESENTS US WITH A PROMISE. Note that the promise is given to several varieties of prayer. I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. The text clearly asserts that all forms of true prayer shall be heard, provided they are presented through Jesus Christ and are for promised blessings. Some are vocal prayers men asknever should we fail to offer up every day and continually the prayer which is uttered by the tongue, for the promise is that the asker shall be heard.

But there are others who, not neglecting vocal prayer, are far more abundant in active prayer, for by humble and diligent use of the means they seek the blessings which they need. Their heart speaks to God by its longings, strivings, emotions and labors. Let them not cease seeking, for they shall surely find. There are others who, in their earnestness, combine the most eager forms, both acting and speaking, for knocking is a loud kind of asking and a vehement form of seeking. If our prayers are vocal speech with God, or if they are the practical use of means ordained, which is real prayeror if they should, best of all, be the continued use of both or if they are expressed only by a tear or a sigh, or even if they remain quite unexpressed in a trembling desire, they shall be heard. All varieties of true prayer shall meet with responses from Heaven.

Now observe that these varieties of prayer are put on an ascending scale. It is said first that we askI suppose that refers to the prayer which is a mere statement of our needs in which we tell the Lord that we need this and that and ask Him to grant it to us. But as we learn the art of prayer we go on further to seekwhich signifies that we marshal our arguments and plead reasons for the granting of our desiresand we begin to wrestle with God for the mercies needed. And if the blessings come not, we then rise to the third degree which is knockingwe become importunatewe are not content with asking and giving reasons, but we throw the whole earnestness of our being into our requests and practice the text which says, the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.

So the prayers grow from askingwhich is the statement, to seeking which is the pleading, and to knockingwhich is the importuning. To each of these stages of prayer there is a distinct promise. He that asks shall havewhat did he ask for? But he that seeks, going further, shall find, shall enjoy, shall grasp, shall know that he has obtained. And he who knocks shall go further still, for he shall understandand to him shall the precious thing be openedhe shall not merely have the blessing and enjoy it, but he will comprehend it! He shall understand with all saints, what are the heights and depths.

I want, however, you to notice this fact, which covers allwhatever form your prayer may assume it shall succeed. If you only ask you shall receive. If you seek you shall find. If you knock it shall be opened. In each case, according to your faith, shall it be unto you. The clauses of the promise before us are not put, as we say, in law, jointlyhe that asks and seeks and knocks shall receivebut they are put severallyhe that asks shall have, he that seeks shall find, he that knocks shall have it opened. It is not when we combine the whole three that we get the blessing, though doubtless if we did combine them we should got the combined reply. But if we exercise only one of these three forms of prayer, we shall still get that which our souls seek after.

These three methods of prayer exercise a variety of our Graces. It is a gloss of the fathers upon this passage that faith asks, hope seeks and love knocksand the gloss is worth repeating. Faith asks because she believes God will give. Hope, having asked, expects, and therefore seeks for the blessing. Love comes nearer, still, and will not take a denial from God, but desires to enter into His house and to sup with Him and, therefore, knocks at His door till He opens. But, again, let us come back to the old pointit matters not which Grace is exerciseda blessing comes to each one. If Faith asks it shall receive. If Hope seeks it shall find. And if Love knocks it shall be opened to her.   
These three modes of prayer suit us in different stages of distress.

There am I, a poor mendicant at Mercys door. I ask and I shall receive but I lose my way so that I cannot find Him of whom I once asked so successfully. Well, then, I may seek with the certainty that I shall find. I am told if I am in the last stage of all, not merely poor and bewildered, but so defiled as to feel shut out from God like a leper shut out of the camp, then I may knock and the door will open to me. Each of these different descriptions of prayer is exceedingly simple. If anybody said, I cannot ask, our reply would be, you do not understand the word. Surely everybody can ask! A little child can ask. Long before an infant can speak it can askit need not use words in order to ask for what it wantsand there is not one among us who is incapacitated from asking.

Prayers need not be fine. I believe God abhors fine prayers. If a person asks charity of you in elegant sentences he is not likely to get it. Finery in dress or language is out of place in boggles. I heard a man in the street, one day, begging aloud by means of a magnificent oration. He used grand language in very pompous style and I dare say he thought he was sure of getting piles of coppers by his borrowed speech. But I, for one, gave him nothing. I felt more inclined to laugh at his bombast. Is it not likely that many great prayers are about as useless? Many Prayer Meetings prayers are a great deal too fine. Keep your figures and metaphors and parabolic expressions for your fellow creatures! Use them for those who want to be instructed, but do not parade them before God! When we pray, the simpler our prayers are the betterthe most plain, most humble language which expresses our meaning is the best.

The next word is seek and surely there is no difficulty about seeking? In finding there might be, but in seeking there is none. When the woman in the parable lost her money she lit a candle and sought for it. I do not suppose she had ever been to the university, or qualified as a lady physician, or that she could have sat on the School Board as a woman of superior sensebut she could seek. Anybody who desires to do so can seek be they man, woman, or childand for their encouragement the promise is not given to some particular philosophical form of seeking, but simply, he that seeks finds.

Then there is knockingwell, that is a thing of no great difficulty. We used to do it when we were boys sometimes too much for the neighbors comfort! And at home, if the knocker was a little too high, we had ways and means of knocking at the door even thena stone would do it, or the heel of a bootanything would make a knocking! It was not beyond our capacity by any means! Therefore, it is put in this fashion by Christ Himself, as much as to tell us, You need have no scholarship, no training, no talent and no wit for prayerask, seek, knockthat is all, and the promise is to everyone of these ways of praying. Will you believe the promise? It is Christ who gives it! No lie ever fell from His lips. O doubt Him not! Pray on if you have prayed, but if you have never prayed before, God help you to begin today!

III. Our third point is that JESUS TESTIFIES TO THE FACT THAT PRAYER IS HEARD. Having given a promise He then adds, in effectYou may be quite sure that this promise will be fulfilled, not only because I say it, but because it is and always has been so. When a man says the sun will rise tomorrow morning, we believe it because it has always risen. Our Lord tells us that, as a matter of indisputable fact, all along the ages true asking has been followed by receiving! Remember that He who stated this fact knew it. If you state a fact you may reply, Yes, as far as your observation goes, it is true. But the observation of Christ was unbounded. There was never a true prayer offered unknown to Him! Prayers acceptable with the Most High come up to Him by the way of the wounds of Christ. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ can speak by personal knowledge and His declaration is that prayer has succeededEveryone that asks receives and he that seeks finds.

Now here we must, of course, suppose the limitations which would be made by ordinary common sense and which are made by Scripture. It is not everyone that frivolously or wickedly asks or pretends to ask of God that gets what he asks for. It is not every silly, idle, unconsidered request of unregenerate hearts that God will answer. By no manner of means common sense limits the statement so far. Besides, Scripture limits it again, You have not because you ask not, or because you ask amiss there is an asking amiss which will never obtain. If we ask that we may consume the good things upon our lust we shall not have them. If we ask for that which would not be to our good we shall be heard by receiving no such answer as we desired. But those things being remembered, the statement of our Lord has no other qualificationeveryone that asks receives.

Let it be remembered that frequently, even when the ungodly and the wicked have asked of God, they have received. Full often in the time of their distress they have called upon God and He has answered them. How can you say that asks one. No, I say not so, but so says Scripture. Ahabs prayer was answered and the Lord said, see you how Ahab humbles himself before Me? Because he humbles himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his sons days will I bring the evil upon his house. So, also, the Lord heard the prayer of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, who did evil in the sight of the Lord. (2 Kings 13:1-4). The Israelites, also, when for their sins were given over to their foes, cried to God for deliverance and they were answeredyet the Lord Himself testified concerning them that they did but flatter with their mouth.

Does this stagger you? Does He not hear the young ravens when they cry? Do you think He will not hear man, that is formed in His own image? Do you doubt it? Remember Nineveh! The prayers offered at Nineveh were they spiritual prayers? Did you ever hear of a Church of God in Nineveh? I have not, neither do I believe the Ninevites were ever visited by converting Gracebut they were, by the preaching of Jonah, convicted that they were in danger from the great Jehovahand they proclaimed a fast and humbled themselves! And God heard their prayer and Nineveh, for a

while, was preserved. Many a time in the hour of sickness and in the time of woe, God has heard the prayers of the unthankful and the evil. Do you think God gives nothing except to the good? Have you dwelt at the foot of Sinai and learned to judge according to the Law of merit? What were you when you did begin to pray? Were you good and righteous? Has not God commanded you to do good to the evil? Will He command you to do what He will not do Himself?

Has He not said that He sends rain upon the just and upon the unjust and is it not so? Is He not daily blessing those who curse Him and doing good to those who despitefully use Him? This is one of the glories of Gods Grace and when there is nothing else good in the man, yet if there is a cry lifted up from his heart, the Lord deigns full often to send relief from trouble. Now, if God has heard the prayers even of men who have not sought Him in the highest manner and has given them temporary deliverances in answer to their cries, will He not much more hear you when you are humbling yourself in His sight and desiring to be reconciled to Him? Surely there is an argument here!

But to come more fully to the point with regard to real and spiritual prayers, everyone that asks receives without any limit whatever. There has never been an instance, yet, of a man really seeking spiritual blessings of God without his receiving them. The publican stood afar off and so broken was his heart that he dared not look up to Heavenyet God looked down on him. Manasseh lay in the low dungeon. He had been a cruel persecutor of the saints. There was nothing in him that could commend him to God, but God heard him out of the dungeon and brought him forth to liberty of soul. Jonah had, by his own sin, brought himself into the whales belly and he was a petulant servant of God at the best but out of the belly of Hell he cried and God heard him. Everyone that asks receives and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened. Everyone!

If I needed evidence I should be able to find it in this Tabernacle. I would ask anyone here who has found Christ to bear witness that God heard his prayer. I do not believe that among the damned in Hell there is one who dares say, I sought the Lord and He rejected me. There shall not be found, at the last day of account, one single soul that can say, I knocked at Mercys door, but God refused to open it. There shall not stand before the Great White Throne a single soul that can plead, O Christ, I would have been saved by You, but You would not save me! I gave myself up into Your hands, but You did reject me. I penitently asked for mercy of You, but I had it not. Everyone that asks receives. It has been so until this dayit will be so till Christ Himself shall come. If you doubt it try it and if you have tried it try it again.

Are you in rags?that matters noteveryone that asks receives. Are you foul with sin?that matters noteveryone that seeks finds. Do you feel yourself as if you were shut out from God altogether?that matters not, eitherknock, and it shall be opened unto you, for everyone that asks receives. Is there no election there? Yes, yes, doubtless there is! But that does not alter this Truth of God which has no limit to it whatevereveryone. What a rich text it is! Everyone that asks receives. When our Lord spoke thus, He could have pointed to His own life as evidenceat any rate we can refer to it now and show that no one asked of Christ who did not receive. The Syro-Phoenician woman was at first repulsed when the Lord called her a dog. But when she had the courage to say, Yet the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table, she soon discovered that everyone that asks receives.

She, also, who came behind Him in the crowd and touched the hem of His garmentshe was no asker, but she was a seekerand she found. I think I hear, in answer to all this, the lamentable wail of one who says, I have been crying to God a long while for salvation. I have asked, I have sought and I have knocked, but it has not come yet. Well, dear Friend, if I am asked which is true, God or you, I know which I shall stand by and I would advise you to believe God before you believe yourself! God will hear prayer, but do you know there is one thing before prayer? What is it? Why, the Gospel is nothe that prays shall be savedthat is not the Gospel! I believe he will be saved, but that is not the Gospel. I am told to preach to you. Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; hewhat?he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.

Now, you have been asking God to save youdo you expect Him to save you without your believing and being baptized? Surely you have not had the impudence to ask God to make void His own Word! Might He not say to you, Do as I bid you. Believe My Son. He that believes on Him has everlasting life. Let me ask you, do you believe Jesus Christ? Will you trust Him? Oh, I trust Him, says one. I trust Him wholly. Soul, do not ask for salvation any moreyou have it alreadyyou are saved! If you trust Jesus with all your soul, your sins are forgiven you and you are saved. And the next time you approach the Lord, go with praise as well as with prayer and sing and bless His name.

But how am I to know that I am saved? asks one. God says, He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. Have you believed? Have you been baptized? If so, you are saved. How do I know that? On the best evidence in all the worldGod says you aredo you need any evidence but that? I want to feel this. Feel! Are your feelings better than Gods witness? Will you make God a liar by asking more signs and tokens than His sure Word of Testimony? I have no evidence this day that I dare trust in concerning my salvation but thisthat I rest on Christ alone with all my heart, soul and strength. Other refuge have I none, and if you have that evidence, it is all the evidence that you need seek for this day. Other witnesses of Divine Grace in your heart shall come, by-and-by, and cluster about you and adorn the doctrines you do professbut now your first business is to believe in Jesus.   
I have asked for faith, says one. Well, what do you mean by that? To

believe in Jesus Christ is the gift of God, but it must be your own act as well. Do you think God will believe for you, or that the Holy Spirit believes instead of us? What has the Holy Spirit to believe? You must believe for yourself or be lost! He cannot liewill you not believe in Him? He deserves to be believed! Trust in Him and you are saved, and your prayer is answered! I think I hear another say, I trust I am already saved, but I have been looking for the salvation of others in answer to my prayers. Dear Friend, you will get it. He that asks receives and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened. But I have sought the conversion of such an one for years with many prayers.

You shall have it, or you shall know one day why you have it not and shall be made content not to have it! Pray on in hope. Many a one has had his prayer for others answered after he has been dead. I think I have reminded you before of the father who had prayed for many years for his sons and daughters and yet they were not converted. In fact, all of them became exceedingly worldly. His time came to die. He gathered his children about his bed, hoping to bear such a witness for Christ at the last that it might be blessed to their conversionbut unhappily for him he was in deep distress of soul. He had doubts about his own interest in Christ. He was one of Gods children who are put to bed in the darkthis being, above all, the worst fear of his mind, that he feared his dear children would see his distress and be prejudiced against religion.

The good man was buried and his sons came to the funeraland God heard the mans prayer that very dayfor as they went away from the grave one of them said to the other, Brother, our father died a most unhappy death. He did, Brother. I was very much astonished at it, for I never knew a better man than our father. Ah, said the first brother, if a holy man such as our father found it a hard thing to die, it will be a dreadful thing for us who have no faith when our time comes. That same thought had struck them all and drove them to the Crossand so the good mans prayer was heard in a mysterious manner.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but while God lives, prayer must be heard. While God remains true to His Word, supplication is not in vain! The Lord give you Divine Grace to exercise it continually. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON Luke 11:1-13; Psalm 107:1-31.   
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Sermon #959 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 6, 1870, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**If a son shall ask for bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much   
more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?   
Luke 11:11-13.**

IN this chapter there is an evident progress. It opens by the disciples asking the Lord to teach them to pray. To that He gave a full and sufficient reply. He prepared them an outline of what complete prayer should be. Brethren, we have need, some of us, to begin with asking to be taught to pray. It will be a blessed sign when it can be said of us, Behold, he prays. And just in proportion as we are instructed how to pray shall we give evidence of a more advanced Christian life. He has most grown in Grace who prays best. Depend upon it, the most acceptable prayer with God is the evidence of a most accepted state of heart within.

Our growth in prayer may be to us the test of our growth in all other respects. Lord, teach us to pray, is a prayer for the young beginner and for the more advanced disciple. It is a suitable petition for as all, for we have none of us yet learned to the full the sacred art of supplication. Then the chapter proceeds a little further to answer a questionwe are shown how to pray, but will God really answer us? Is prayer only meant to do good to the suppliant? Does it end with the benefit which it works in us, or does it really affect the heart of God? Do replies actually come from Heaven in answer to the entreaties of Gods children?

The answer is given by our Lord with great clearness. We have a parable to show that as importunity does evidently affect men, so importunity will also gain an answer from Godthat He will be pleased to give us what we need if we do but know how, with incessant earnestness, to come again and again to Him in prayer. We are assured that asking is attended with receiving, that seeking is attended with finding, that knocking will lead to opening. That it is not a vain thing to pray, that our prayers are not lost on the wind, or expended merely on ourselvesbut that there is a connection established by Divine decree between the prayer that is raised on earth and the mercy that is given forth from Heaven.

But since we are such sinful creatures, the chapter proceeds to deal with a grave doubt which may arise in the troubled mind. It may be God will hear, and as a general rule will make replies in mercy. But I am an undeserving one. If the Lord should be incensed at my prayers and answer me in wrath instead of love, I should deserve it. If after having made my confession, He should deal with me, judging me out of my own

mouth, and then and there condemn me, what should I say?

The Savior very explicitly answers the question as to whether God will give answers of peace, and will always grant us good things. And He puts it thus to uswhen your children ask for good things you grant their requests. You do not mock them by giving them something that may look like what they asked for, but is only a deception. You never play upon their ignorance and mock their childish confidence by giving them the injurious semblance of what would have been a useful reality. When their prayers are right, you answer them.

If you, then, being evil, fallen creatures, yet answer your childrens right and proper prayers, how much more will your heavenly Father answer your fitting prayers, and give to you good things? He will not put you off with evil things when you ask for good, but He will grant you in Truth the good gifts which you are seeking after.

You will observe that the fear, lest God should give us something evil when we are seeking something good, is very naturally raised in the heart by a sense of sinfulness. And is increased by the conviction that we should not always be able to judge whether the thing received is good or not good. We tremble lest we should receive from the Divine hands what appears to be gracious, and yet may be sent in judgment. But he says, No, your children trust in their father, and their father never deceives themyou may safely trust your heavenly Father that when you ask a good thing from Him, He will most assuredly give you a good thing, and not an evil thing in lieu of it.

You are true and kind to your childrenmuch more shall God be good towards you. In saying, How much more? we ask an unanswerable question. As high as God is above us, so high is the certainty that He will give us good above the certainty that we will give good things to our children. Yet since we feel in our hearts quite certain that we could not mock our children, let us be quite convinced that it is still further beyond all question that God will ever mock us and give to us an evil thing when we are seeking a good thing at His hands.

By the way, it has been remarked that the expression of our Savior here is, you being evil. That expression evidently teaching the doctrine of our fallen condition, the doctrine of human depravity. You, My disciples, you are evil. You who have children, whether you are upright or otherwise in others estimation, you are all evil, and yet, being evil, you still have such affection and judgment that you give your children good gifts. Much more shall He who is infinitely good give good things to you when you seek them.

I have met with many expositions of this passage in which there is an attempt made to show that the child asked a wrong thing, and wished for a stone which appeared to be bread. Nothing of the kind is here. The child is not represented as asking for a stone, but as seeking, as he should, a most proper gift, namely, bread. No mistake was made at all by the childhis prayer was what it should be. The point of the parable touches the fathers answer. The Truth here taught is not that God will refuse us evil things if in our mistake we ask for them. That is a Truth, but it is not alluded to here. The one statement of this verse is that prayers for good things will be answeredand that they will not be answered with gifts wearing the mere appearance of goodbut with the actual good things desired. That simple thought I shall endeavor to enlarge upon in this mornings discourse.

Our first head will beright prayers, right answers. The second point will be the best prayer, the surest answer. And the last head will be this the prayer of the text is the best, for it contains all blessings in it.

1. First, then, RIGHT PRAYERS, RIGHT ANSWERS. The child asks for bread, his father does not give him a stone. He asks for a fishthere are certain kinds of fish that are very like snakesbut the father does not give him a serpent. The child asks for an eggwe are told by some that certain scorpions, when they fold themselves up, look like eggsthe father never makes a fool of the child, or injures him by giving him a scorpion for an egg.

If we may be allowed to put some interpretation upon this, I should say if we begin our prayers by asking God for necessities, that is bread, bread temporal, or the Bread of Life, He will not give us useless, tooth-breaking, unsatisfying stones. We shall have, when we pray for necessary things, the really necessary things themselves, not the imitation of them, but the actual blessings. And if our faith grows a little stronger, and having obtained bread, we may ask for fishnot absolutely a necessitybut a comfort and a relish. If we make bold to ask for spiritual comforts, consoling gifts and ennobling Graces, something over and above what is absolutely necessary to save us, our heavenly Father will not mock us by giving us superficial comforts which might be injurious as a serpent.

He will give us so much of comfort as we can bear. And it shall be pure, holy, healthy comfort. And if, gathering more confidence still, we ask for an egg, which I take it was in Christs day a rarer luxury, we shall not be deluded by its counterfeit. Only once, except in this place, and that in the book of Job, and Job was a rich man, do we ever read of eating eggs at all in Scripture. And all through the Bible we find not even the mention of poultry till our Saviors day. And then chickens were so valuable that eggs were considered a high luxury, for which a child, at least, might not be expected to make a request.

But if the child is bold enough at last to ask for this larger favor, his father will not punish his impertinence by putting into his hand a deadly scorpion. Even thus, if I can summon faith enough to ask for the highest enjoyments and enrichments of Divine Grace, the highest blessings of Christian manhood, the most rapt and intense fellowship with Christ, I shall not receive, instead of that an intoxicating excitement, a delirious fanaticism, or some other deadly or injurious thing.

Now, this at first sight may not seem to be a very useful Truth of God, but I think I can show you that it is. To begin with, the common blessings of Providence. You have been laying your case before the Throne with much earnestness of late, and you have prayed God to guide and lead you in all the steps of life. At this moment you are overwhelmed with trouble distress has followed distress. Now, do not judge God harshly, above all do not judge Him so harshly as to think Him less kind and tender than you would be yourself. Your child asking for bread receives bread. You

have asked guidance and shall have it. You have asked Providential care and you have obtained it. These present circumstances, which God has appointed for you are what you have asked for.

Your present lot is from the Lord. He has not given you a stone. It seems hard, perhaps. May it not be the crust of true bread for all that? Believe it to be so, but never suspect that you are treated ungenerously by your Lord. Were you as able to judge as He is, you would perceive that He has given you that which is for your lasting good, and has appointed the best thing possible for you. Do not look upon your present distress as a stone, a serpent, or a scorpion. If so you will be afraid of your mercies and tremble at your consolations. Providential love you have sought, and Providential love is yours beyond all question, even though trials surround you.

For by all these things men live, and in all these is the life of our spirit. God will bring good out of the apparent evil. Indeed, if Faith will but open her eyes, it is not apparent evil, but it is even now evidently good. Blind Unbelief misrepresents the work of God. Faiths clearer eye discerns the Truth. Do not suspect your God of giving you the scorpion instead of the egg. You have asked that here on earth Providence may deal wisely with you, and that God may be glorified by you. Infinite Wisdom is even now fulfilling your hallowed wish. Amid fiery trials your faith is honoring God, and every circumstance of your affliction is made subservient to your souls perfection.

In spiritual matters how often in our earnest anxiety to be right have we questioned whether the spiritual gifts which we have received are what we hope they are, or whether after having sought of God Divine Grace, we may not, after all have missed it. For instance, many of us, I hope most of us, are possessors this day of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We look to His Cross and we are lightened. We see Him as our suffering Substitute, and our soul feels joy and peace as the result of faith. Our faith does lay her hand upon His head as the scapegoat, and we see sin carried away by Him into the wilderness of forgetfulness.

But the question will come and sometimes very bitterly, Is this true faith? Is this the faith of Gods elect? Is it not, after all, presumption for me to say and believe that in Jesus Christ I am pardoned and saved? There is, evidently, a notional faith, may not mine be that? There is, it seems, a faith of devils, for they believe and tremble. May not mine be of that sort? Is this which I have sought of God in prayer, and which I accepted as my answer, the real Grace of faith, or am I, after all, deluding myself? Look, my Brother, where did you seek this faith? Did you not ask your heavenly Father to give it to you? Have you not devoutly sought, and do you not still seek today, even with tears, that He would work in you the faith which is of His own Spirits creation?

Now do you think that He would have given you a stone instead of bread, that He would have put into your heart a carnal presumption, or have suffered it to come there while you were waiting for the humble, simple faith of Gods own people? My Lord, I sought it at Your feet, and there I found it! And it cannot be otherwise than a good and real faith which I found when I looked up to You. Be assured, O anxious Heart, that in the vital matter of faith true seekers shall not be put off with false faith. The same question may arise as to every spiritual Grace. We will take repentance. I am not for a moment about to depreciate the value of a discriminating theology, which clearly shows the difference between legal bondage, and the evangelical repentance of a child of God.

But I suppose few of us can sit under sermons of that order, especially if the preachers make a great many nice distinctions, without feeling, I am afraid I come short on several points. I fear that my repentance does not come up to the mark, and I hardly know whether I can quite say that I have so renounced sin, so abhorred it, so detested it, so loathed it from the very bottom of my soul, as this good man describes. Well, then, it will be a sweet thing to fall back upon thisI seek repentance of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. I come to my Father and I say, Create in me a new heart, O God. If my heart is not broken and contrite, break it. And heal it if it is.

I earnestly desire that the Lord would give me a tender spirit. My longing is towards the repentance which is of His own working. I lay myself down like a field, and ask Him to plow me. I put myself before Him as the patient places his limb under the surgeons knifeand I beseech Him to deal with me in the most cutting and severe manner, so that He may but rid me of the disease of sin. Now, if you sincerely act thus, I am sure you will not be deceived in your repentance. You shall receive the repentance that needs not to be repented of. You would not give your child the serpent instead of the fishneither will God suffer you to be deluded with a suppositious repentance instead of the Gospel repentance which is the peculiar watermark of His own chosen.

Now, as I have said, all our Divine Graces may be subjected to the same questioning, and our confidence in them may be reestablished by the same method. If you have sought them of the Lord, and have waited upon Him in prayer anxiously desiring to have such as He givesand only such as He givesyou shall not be deceived or disappointed. He of whom you seek these gifts is Truth itself and gives no mockeries to His sons. If you went to pretended mediators and priests, you would be deceived, but never by the one Mediator, Jesus Christ.

If you dream that the spiritual benefit is to pass through mortal handsthere are priests nowadays, like the priests of Egypt, Jannes and Jambreswho during the passage of the fish through their hands would have transformed it into a serpent, and craftily exchanged the egg for a scorpion by a little manipulation. If, then, I have got my religion at second hand I may have been deceived. But if I have gone to God Himself, my Father, in earnest and importunate prayer, and have desired to receive these blessings direct from His Son and His Spirit, no mistake can have occurred. I must have received the good thing which I sought.

We will take one more instance, and that shall comprehend the whole. My dear Brothers and Sisters, in looking back upon all our experience, the doubt will occur to us whether, after all, it may not have been a fallacy and a delusion. I thought that I was brought out of darkness into Gods marvelous light. I thought that I rejoiced in the Lord. I have thought that my prayers have been answered. I have believed that I have been led from

Grace to Grace by His Spirit. I have thought, and if not awfully deceived it is true, that I have had fellowship with the Father and with His Son. I have had but few ecstasies, but I have had much peace. I have had both the mournful and the cheerful experiences of Gods peopleI think I have.

But in dark times we say, Is it so? Am I, after all, a true child of God? May I not, after all, have persuaded myself that I was converted during a revival or under a certain earnest minister? May I not, since then, have propped up that deceptive supposition by the respect and esteem of Christian people, and may I not, up till now, have been a deceiver, or selfdeceived? May not the whole thing turn out to be one awful sham? In such a case we come back to thiswhere did I seek this, and what did I seek? Did I go to God and desire to be a mere professor? Was it my wish to gain a worldly position, or to win the respect of my friends by professing to be a Christian?

Or did I go sincerely to the Lord, and for love of salvation desire to be converted? Did I desire the Savior that I might be reconciled to God, that I might be made holy? And since then have I still desired truly and earnestly to possess the Grace which God gives, and not the mere imitations of man? Do I pant to have Gods own Spirit in my soul, and is that my sincere and earnest prayer now?

Well, then, I have no right to suspect that I am deceived. Like a child, I believe that my heavenly Father has given me what I asked for. I have done right in so believing. My child would do me a gross injustice if he suspected that the fish I gave him was not a fish, but a serpent. And I do my God a great injustice if, sincerely knowing that I have sought the one thing necessary at His hands through Jesus Christ, I suspected that He has permitted me to be deluded with something else. No, if I sought it from Him, and sought it sincerely, I have now the good thing which I longed for.

Now, this simple Truth may yet be very, very helpful to youfor nowadays men assail our faith. Some of us have waited upon the Lord for teaching, and we have been established in the old faith which men now sneer and rail at as a worn-out creed. We have been taught as we believe, by the Spirit of God, and by Gods Word. And now, because this advanced age and this enlightened century have discovered that these old-fashioned truths are not philosophical, are we to believe that when we went to God for teaching we did not receive bread, but a stone?

I do not believe it, nor will I give up the bread I have long lived on because these men choose to call it a stone. I will hold it still, it is my food, and on it I shall live forever. If a man has sought of God to be filled with zeal till he becomes like a burning seraph, some will tell him this is all wildfirethe man is excited beyond boundshe ought to be more reserved. My dear Brother, if you have sought from God the zeal of His House that eats you up, do not believe that the spirit that God has given you is wildfire. Do not believe that your ardor for the conversion of sinners is fanaticism. Hold on to it and get more of it, and do not let the devil delude you out of the treasure you have gained.   
The fish is a fish, not a serpent, and the egg is an egg, and not a scorpion. And so, too, when the Believer has stood fast in the faith and would not leave it, then he has been told, It is only your natural obstinacy. You are pig-headed. You have got hold of a thing and there is no making you give it up. Many a man of God has been ridiculed for his determination it is not that be has any real martyrs spirit in him, it is only his animal obstinacy. Ah, my Friend, but you know where you got this firmness! And if you wait upon the Lord, and say, Establish me in Your fear, my God. Help me to bear contradiction of sinners against myself, as my Redeemer did, then God will not give you any evil thing. Having done all, still stand, endure to the end, and you shall gain the Crown of Life that fades not away. That is our first pointprayer for good things meets a good answer.

II. Then, dear Friends, the question will arise in every heartIt seems, then, that I have only to ascertain that my prayer is for a really good thing, and I shall have it. Just so, and therefore, secondly, THE PRAYER FOR THE BEST THING IS SUREST OF AN ANSWER, for, says the text, How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? There is no doubt about the Holy Spirit being a good thing. When we, therefore, ask for Him, for His Divine Presence and influence, we may rest assured that God will give it. Make that our first point under this headGod will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask for Him.

Beloved, the Holy Spirit sometimes is represented as the wind, the lifegiving breath. He blows upon the valleys thickly strewn with slain, and they are quickened to life. You and I, though we are made to live, often feel that life to be flagging, and almost dying. The Spirit of God can quicken us, revive in us the spark of Divine life, and strengthen in our hearts the life of God. Pray for this quickening breath, and, my Brothers and Sisters, God will give it to you. As surely as you sincerely pray, you shall have and feel the revival of the life within.

The Spirit of God is sometimes compared to water. It is He who applies the blood of Jesus and sanctifies us. He cleanses us, fertilizes us. Well, He will come to us in that capacity. Do we feel that our sin has much power over us? O Spirit of God, destroy sin within us and work in us purity! You have already given us the new birth by water and the Spirit, go on and complete Your work till our whole nature shall be fashioned in the image of the Great First-born. You shall have it if you seek itGod will give you this Spirit if this you seek for.

The Holy Spirit is revealed to us under the image of light. He illuminates the mind, He makes our natural darkness flee. Wait upon Him, O child of God, that you may be led into all Truth. He can make that which now perplexes you to become plain. He can uplift you into Truths of God which are now too high for your attainment. Wait upon Him! As a child of God, long to be taught of God. I do not know how to express to you the sense I feel just now of the deep condescension of God in promising to give us the Holy Spirit. He has given us His Son, and now He promises his Spirit!

Here are two gifts, unspeakable in preciousness! Will God, in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? Will God dwell in man? Can it be that the infinite Spirit, God over all, blessed forever, will dwell in my poor heart, and make my body to be His temple? It is certainly so. For as sure as it is

that God will give good things to those that ask for good things, He will surest of all give the Holy Spirit to them that ask for the Holy Spirit. Sit not in the dark, then, when the light of God will break upon you if you seek it!

The Holy Spirit is set forth to us under the emblem of fire, and in this capacity He kindles enthusiasm of spirit, and burning zeal in the hearts of Gods people. The tongue of fire speaks with a matchless might. The heart of flame conquers the sons of men. O that we had this fire! It is to be had. The Spirit of God will come in answer to our cries. He will come and fire the Church, and each individual member of it. Oftentimes the Spirit of God is set forth as oil. By Him we have the Divine anointing. The prayer that the pastor may be anointed with fresh oil is a very welcome one, but it is equally needed that you, yourselves, have your lamps supplied that your light may not go out. This desire will be fulfilled. He will give the Holy Spirit in this way to them that ask Him for it.

And so, too, as the gentle dropping dew that cheers and refreshes the grass, so will the Spirit come to console our spirits, care-worn, tried with the heat of this worlds busy day. The Holy Spirit will come and bedew us if we seek Him. As the blessed Dove, bearing peace upon His wings, He will come to us. In fact, there is no operation of the Spirit which will not be brought in us if we seek it. There is no attribute of the Spirit of God which shall not be put forth for us if we ask it. He will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

From the connection in which the text stands, I gather the following remark, namely, that it will truly be the Holy Spirit. Go back again to that first thought. The child asks for bread, and does not get a stone. You ask for the Holy Spirit, and you shall receive the Holy Spirit. Some persons have been misled by an evil spirit. I believe that very much of the rant that came out years ago about the date of the second coming of Christ, the unknown tongues, and I do not know what beside of blatant nonsense, was of an evil spirit. And I query whether there was a humble laying down of minds before Gods Throne to seek the Holy Spirit. Whether there was not much self-sufficiency, and much desire for something that would make important its possessor which led certain eminent preachers into vain imaginings and fanatical rant.

You shall not receive an evil spirit instead of the good Spirit, if you humbly and patiently wait upon the Most High. Neither shall you be misled by fancy. Men will tell you that you are deluded when you experience high joys and deep experiences. But if you have sought the Spirit sincerely and intensely, it shall be the Spirit that God will give you. You need not be afraid when you bow before Jehovahs Throne in Jesus name and ask for the Holy Spirit, that you will be sent away with anything short of that Holy Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son.

But it appears plainly enough from the text that this Holy Spirit is to be given in answer to prayer. Did not we hear some time ago from certain wise Brethren that we were never to pray for the Spirit? I think I heard it said often, We have the Holy Spirit, and therefore we are not to pray for Him. Like that other certain declaration of the same brotherhood, that we have pardon of sin, and are not to pray for it, just as if we were never to pray for what we have! If we have life we are to pray that we have it more abundantly. If we have pardon in one respect we are to ask for a fuller sense of it. And if we have the Holy Spirit so that we are quickened, and saved, we do not ask for Him in that capacity, but we ask for His power in other directions, and for His Grace in other forms.

I do not go before God now and say, Lord, I am a dead sinner, quicken me by Your Spirit, for I trust I am quickened of His Spirit. But being quickened, I now cry, Lord, let not the life You have given me ebb down till it becomes very feeble, but give me of Your Spirit that the life within me may become strong and mighty, and may subdue all the power of death within my members, that I may put forth the vigor and energy which come from Yourself through the Spirit.

O you that have the Spirit, you are the very men and women to pray that you may experience more of His matchless operations and gracious influences. And in all the benign sanctity of His indwelling may you seek that yet more and more you may know Him. You have this as your encouragementthat God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Ever since certain Brethren gave up asking for the Holy Spirit they have not had it, and they have gone aside into many inventions. If they will not ask, they shall not have, but be it yours and mine to wait humbly and patiently upon the Lord that He may daily give us of His Spirit.

I desire earnestly to call your attention to one thing which our Savior saysIf you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how ought it to run to make it parallel?How much more shall your heavenly Father know how to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? Would not that be the parallel? Of course it would, but He does not say so. He very kindly puts it, in the first place, that we, know how to give good gifts, for sometimes we know how to give them, but we cannot do it. It is a bitter thing, and yet it has sometimes happened that the child has said, Father, give me bread, and with a breaking heart the father has had to reply, My child, there is none.

It must be one of the hardest trials of human life, and yet it is the trial of tens of thousands in this city at this time, to have to say, No, there is not even a crust of bread for my child. You see the father knows how, but he cannot do it. But the text does not say that God knows how to give the Holy Spirit, it says a great deal more than that. It declares that He does give, because with Him to know how is the same thing as to do it. He gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. He does not only know how, but He does it. Never does He have to say to His child, My child, I cannot. The poor sinner says, Lord, help me to repent, and the Lord never says, I have not enough of the Holy Spirit to make you repent.

When one of His children cries, Lord, give me the anointing of the Holy One that I may understand Your Gospel more fully, the heavenly Father never answers, I cannot give you so much of the Holy Spirit as that. Boundlessly will He give if Faith dares but open her mouth wide. You are not straitened in Him. You are straitened in yourselves. Brothers and Sisters, I am telling you nothing new, but a very simple Truth. And yet, for all that, a Truth which we do not put in practice. We may have the Spirit of

God resting upon us. As Stephen was a man filled with the Holy Spirit, even so may we. No miracles do we seek, but all the spiritual uplifting which the Holy Spirit gave to men of old we need, and He can give it to us still.

Though He will not reveal new Truthswe do not want Him to, for we have already the complete Gospel revealedHe will bring home the old Truths to our souls and make them potent upon our consciencesand upon our livesthis is what we want! Oh, if any of you are but just Christians, and are not glorifying God, nor living near Him, nor mighty in prayer, nor well taught in Scripture, nor useful in your livesI beseech you rememberif you have not the Spirit it is because you do not seek Him importunately!

You do not seek Him with a deep sense of your need of Him. If you, being evil, give your children bread, how much more will God give you the Spirit? And as you, being evil, do not mock your child by putting him off without the bread, and giving him something else, neither will your heavenly Father. He will give you the real Spiritnot enthusiasm that might mislead you! Not fanaticism that might injure you! Not self-conceit that might become like a deadly scorpion to youbut He promises to give His own gentle, truthful, infallible Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

III. Now for our last point. THE BEST OF PRAYERS, WHICH IS SURE TO BE HEARD, IS ALSO A MOST COMPREHENSIVE ONE. Turn to the parallel passage in the Gospel of Matthew (7:11). Note that Matthew says nothing about the egg. And then read the eleventh verse, If you 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?

Now what does our text say, How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? Is it not clear then that the Holy Spirit is the equivalent for good things, and that, in fact, when the Lord gives us the Holy Spirit He gives us all good things? What a comprehensive prayer, then, is the prayer for the Spirit of God!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, sit down with pencil in hand and a sheet of blank paper before you, and write down all your spiritual wants. I will judge of your wisdom by the length of the listfor if you know yourself you will find you have not done yetyou are a great mass of wants. To pray for all these things separately might seem a very long exercise. My dear Brethren, just take the pencil, and do as the school boys do when they add up the total of their sums. You will find it all adds to thisthe Holy Spirit.

My God, give me Your Holy Spirit, and I have all. But do we not need the Savior? says one. Truly, but the Holy Spirit, when He comes, takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. That is the great value of the Holy Spirit. He shall glorify Me. Wherever the Spirit of God comes there comes the blood of the Atonement, we are brought near by it, and every spiritual blessing bought with blood is brought by the Holy Spirit home to the soul. If you have the Spirit He does not come empty-handed. He comes loaded with all the treasures of the Everlasting Covenantthe blessings ordained for you from before the foundation of the world. And He brings the blessings secured to you in the Covenant of Grace, and the blessings bought for you by Jesus precious blood. Do, then, let this be your prayer; Give me, O God, Your Holy Spirit.

Then, my dear Friends, your prayer is intercessory as well as for yourselves. You pray for your children, for your wife, for your neighbors, for your friends. I hope your intercessory roll is a long one. If God gives you power to bless men by your prayers, do not stay the blessing. What is it that you want for others? In one word, it is the Holy Spirit! Let the Holy Spirit be given to that dear boy of yours, and he will have a tender conscienceyou have often wished he had. He will have a desire after Christ, and he will find Christ. He will be a Christian. Let the Holy Spirit be given to that girl of yours. She will have a desire for the Word of God, a love for the means of Grace. She will find the Savior, she will become a useful Christian woman.

Your neighbors, you prayed that they might go with you to hear the Gospel, and a very excellent prayer it was. Still it would be a fuller prayer, still, that the Spirit would visit them. Some have been visited by the Holy Spirit who have not been in the House of God. Even at their work, Divine impulses they could not account for, have followed them. The fact is, the hearing of the Word is but the vehicle, the power lies in the Spirit of God. I put it to you, therefore, whether it is not a most fitting prayer for you to offer for your neighbors and kinsfolk.

And, now, the last point is one I wish to impress upon your hearts, my dear Friends. Tomorrow is the Day of Prayer. As I have said, I hope you may be all, with one accord, in one place in prayer. But I humbly suggest to you that we should all pray throughout that day and onward, that God will give to His Churches more and more of the Holy Spirit. Just now, I do not know how you feel, but I am ill at ease. The Church of England is eaten through and through with Sacramentarianism, but Nonconformity appears to me to be almost as badly riddled with philosophical infidelity. Those of whom we thought better things are turning aside one by one from the fundamentals of the faith.

At first they gave up the doctrine of the eternity of future punishment, now it must be the doctrine of the Fallfirst one thing then another. If some men have their way all the doctrines of the Word must go. They treat the doctrines of Scripture as though they were all disproved, and only held by a few ignorant bigots. Through and through, I believe, the heart of England is honeycombed with a detestable infidelity which dares, still, to go into the pulpit, and call itself Christian. I pray that God may preserve our denomination from it.

But my prayer shall go up that He will give us the Holy Spiritfor men never go wrong with the Holy SpiritHe will keep them right, and lead them into all Truth. Soundness of doctrine is only worth having when it is the result of the living indwelling of God in the Church. And because too much of the Holy Spirit has departed, we see the signs that the orthodox faith is given up, and the inventions of man preached instead.

Sometimes I breathe, as I walk along, this prayer, that God would raise up more ministers to preach the Gospel with power. There is so much feeble preaching, mere twaddling, and so little declaration of the Gospel with power. But I do not know that I will pray that prayer again. I will put up this, Lord, send Your Spirit upon the Churches! Then will come the

ministers! Then will come the earnest workers. The Spirit of God will touch their tongues with fire, and they will say, Here am I, send me. And once again we shall have back the Puritan age of preaching and ministries like those of Whitfield, Edwards, and McCheyne.

The Spirit of God is the power of the Church and speaks with might in her. My longing is that the Churches may be more holy. I grieve to see so much of worldly conformity! How often wealth leads men astray. How many Christians follow the fashions of this wicked world? But shall I pray that the Churches may be holy? I will, but I will put my prayer in this formI will ask that God will give the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of holiness. He leads to obedience, purges from sin and creates the image of God in His people.

I desire to see, and I think you all do, more unity among the Churches. It is a pity when Churches fall out, and chide, and fight. Ecclesiastical quarrels are generally more bitter than any other. Do not so much pray for unity as put it all into this, Lord, give the Holy Spirit. For if the Holy Spirit is in us and abounds, we shall not be dividedthe Church of God will feel the unity of life. Life it is that creates true unity among the people of God. If there is anything else that we long to see in the Churches, and I confess there are a thousand thingsfor I would desire to see them increased with men as with a flockI would desire to see them built up in an intelligent understanding of the Doctrines of Grace.

I desire to see them looking for the coming of Christ and ready for His advent. If we desire all these, let us ask that the Holy Spirit may be more plenteously givenand when this prayer is answered, as answered it must bethen shall we see all that our soul desires. I do, therefore, very earnestly, over and over again, ask you to make tomorrow a day of real prayer. And if you cannot be here in body, yet all day long cry mightily unto the God of Sabaoth, our Father, who has spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us allwho will also with Him freely give us all things, if we know how to ask aright.

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THE PEACE OF THE DEVIL AND THE PEACE OF GOD   
NO. 2157

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 3, 1890, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace. Luke 11:21.   
The Lord will give strength unto His people, the Lord will bless His people with peace.   
Psalm 29:11.**

PEACE is a condition of things greatly to be desired. To dread no outward disturbance and to feel no inward stormwho does not desire such a state? Peace has been called a pearl and rightly, for it is precious and smiles with soft, mild radiance bedecking the heart that wears it. It is, indeed, a pearl of great pricehe that has it has more than riches. If his peace is, in very deed, the true pearl, he who wears it in his breast is one of the favored sons of God. There may be some few people in the world who do not love peace, but we love not their spirit. Certain stormy natures delight in tempest and, like sea birds, ride on the crests of raging billows. Men of the Byron type are restless and an atmosphere of peace suits them not. Their spirits, like thunderbolts, rush onward, finding pleasure in the crash with which they force their willful way.

I need not go out of my way for such, for in vain we speak to those who will not hear. The most of us were cast in another mold. We are not ravens and cannot remain forever on the wing. But, like the dove of Noah, we seek rest for the soles of our feet and we fly here and there until we find the olive leaf of peace. How often, amid the disturbances of this troubled world, have we cried, Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest! We were not reared like eaglets on stern crags among the callow lightningwe listen to the turtles voice and love the brooks that warble music as they flow. I know that many of you sigh for restyou labor that you may enter into it. If you have found the rest which Jesus gives, your heart is sure to sing

*Forever here my rest shall be   
Close to Your bleeding side:   
This all my hope, and all my plea   
For me the Savior died.*

Peace and rest are two names for a flower which buds on earth, but only found full-blown in Heaven! Yet even the faint perfume of the unopened blossom excites our strong desire. Gently does the Savior attract us to Himself by that sweet callCome unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Every precious thing in this world is sure to be counterfeited. If the government mint issues gold and

silver money, rogues will be found to make spurious coin. The more a thing is cried up, the more is there need of caution that you are not taken in with base imitations of it. Satan is the cunning ape of God and whatever God does, he tries to do the same with his enchantments. Therefore, while there is a peace more precious than the gold of Ophir, there is another peace which is worse than worthless! When a soul is borne up upon the waters of false peace, its case is hopeless till that peace is dried up and the soul is stranded in self-despair.

I thought this morning I might do you some service if I tried to set forth the two peaces, the peace of the devil and the peace of God. May God the Holy Spirit give discerning hearts to all of you, that you may not be deceived by the poisonous imitation of the waters of peace! May you discern the counterfeit and reject it with indignation! And may you find the true peace at the feet of the Prince of Peace! Oh, for the peace of God, which passes all understanding! For my part, I should dread to give peace to anyone, upon any subject at the expense of the Truth of God. A temporary hope is ill purchased at the cost of cruel disappointment.

A poor woman was the loving mother of an only son. He was very dear to her. He fell sick, indeed, he was sick unto death but the mother could not bear to think so. She scraped together the necessary fee for a physician and, oh, the peace of heart she had when the trusted man came downstairs and said to her, Your son will recover. There is no grave cause to fear. Nurse him carefully and very soon he will be at his post again. The mother was restful of heart, for she believed the doctor. Within a single day her son died and those hours of false peace were the wormwood and the gall of her affliction. It was a sad, sad pity to have raised her hopes for she cried, Oh, if I had known that he was going to die, I should not then so bitterly have felt his loss! But I am grievously disappointed. How could the doctor tell me he would live?

The physician was either greatly mistaken, or else wished to soothe the mothers manifest anguish. If the latter was the case, his untruthfulness was not wise. I cannot follow the same course. It is a pity to create a peace which is baseless. It is lamentable to me that anyone of you should be slumbering in peace when a great danger is near which will cause that peace to vanish as a dream when one awakes. Avoid that peace which will prove deceptive in the present and ruinous in the futurelong for that which will keep your heart and mind today and forever. Follow me, I pray you, while I speak of the two forms of peace set forth in my two texts.

I. First, there is THE DEVILS PEACE. The foul spirit keeps things quiet in the heart over which he rulesWhen a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace. The heart of man is not lawfully Satans palace, but he has made it so by capture. In his pride he loves to dwell in the midst of this captured stronghold so that he may vaunt himself over the Most High from whom he has taken the heart of His creature. Satan values a conquered human heart as a palacehe takes pleasure in domineering over the soul which he has forcibly torn away from God. That he may dwell securely, he covers himself with armor and he keeps constant watch and ward. Hence the house is quiet, for his watchful power puts down every token of mutiny against his tyranny.

The Psalmist describes the dreadful peace of the wicked in Psalm seventy-threeThere are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Everything goes smoothly with the man who is left in this fatal conditionTheir eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. Though it would seem that they are really prospering, it is not sothey are set in slippery places and they will be cast down unto destruction. There is really nothing enviable in the condition of the godless, but everything pitiable. They cry, Peace, peace, where there is no peace. What peace can there be to those whose rebellions are so many? Satan makes conscience lie still that his power may be confirmed over the heart of the ungodly.

I may be speaking to some here who are in good health, have a fair trade and enjoy credit with their neighbors and therefore they have an earthly peace and care nothing about being at peace with God. My design shall be to disturb that peace, for if it is the peace of the devil. The sooner it is broken the better for the soul. This peace is often merely outward. Men put on the air of peace when they do not feel it in their hearts. You will often meet with irreligious men who tell you that they are perfectly happy and then askWhat do they want with Christ? They feel themselves all rightwhat need have they of a new birth? They are getting on so well without Gods blessing that they do not care to seek it. Their laughter is loud, their jests are endless, their cares sit lightly upon them.

They appear to have no anxiety for the faults of the past, the temptations of the present, or the recompenses of the futureand yet this peace is all external. The crust of ice is hardly strong enough to bear a fly. Follow them to their beds and see their fear! Listen to them in a thunderstormsee them at sea in a tempest and you will find that they are the victims of an awful dread. Some display a peace of sheer bravado. They want to seem happy and therefore they put on the mask of the merry Andrew. The plowboy, when he goes through the churchyard, is afraid of ghosts and therefore whistles to keep his courage upand many who are loaded with apprehension try to conceal it by those flippant songs in which they boast of driving dull care away. In the secret of their soul that same dull care sits on the throne of their hearts and is not to be driven away by the ballad, the fiddle or the dance.

Those are often the slaves of misery who figure as the children of mirth. Is it not so with many? When they speak of pleasure, it is from the teeth outward, for there is no Artesian well of joy springing from the depths of their soul. They hold themselves up as the mirror of pleasure while their heart is breaking with unutterable pain. In all who have not come to Christ and found peace through His precious blood, their peace is false. Let them say what they will of it, it has no foundation or justification. They have no peace with God for it is written, There is no peace, says my

God, to the wicked. The great God is the high contracting party with whom peace must be made and if He disowns it, in vain will a man pretend to possess it!

A sinner may say, I am at peace as to God but if this comes of forgetting or ignoring Him, it is a sorry sham. If a man has to forget God before he has peace, that fact betrays a fatal secret. If the man, on remembering God, is troubled, then his peace is a mere writing on the sand. Such peace is false peace and what true man will solace himself with that which is false? Better know that we are at war, if it is so, than dote upon a peace which is a fools paradise and only exists in fancy. I had rather be wounded in a thousand spiritual conflicts than be soothed into eternal destruction by a false peace! Let my hopes be slain by the sword of the Truth of God rather than nourished on the bread of lies. God forgive that we should prophesy smooth things for ourselves while the pen of justice is signing our death warrant!

One prayer I often prayLord, let me know the worst of my case. And though there is no great pleasure in such a petition, I would suggest that all of you should offer it. It can do you no harm. Pray with the Psalmist, Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there are any wicked ways in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. See to it that you are not liars unto your own souls. To many this peace comes through ignorance. They do not know those terrible Truths which would make peace impossible. They know not that sin is a deadly viper and therefore they toy with it as with a bird.

They are scarcely conscious that they have committed any sin worth mentioning, but if the light of Gods Law were turned upon them they would see that they are guilty before God and exceedingly vile. They are not innocent, as they suppose, but guilty before the living God! Let the Holy Spirit work in a man a sense of sin and an expectation of judgment to come and I guarantee you he will have no more peace till he has fled for refuge to the hope set before him in the Gospel! If any of you are wrapped up in a peace woven in the loom of ignorance, I pray God it may be torn to shreds! But, cries one, Where ignorance is peace, tis folly to be wise. No, no! But where peace is founded on ignorance, it is folly begetting folly!

Oh, be wise, and drink not the fools cordial! Know your true condition even though that knowledge may cost you present loss of rest. To keep men ignorant is one of Satans devices because they are then easier to governhe dreads that you should go where the Gospel is preached! If any of you are under Satans dominion, you are here this morning against your tyrants wishes. If he could have his way you would never come within earshot of Gods Word! Even now he will try to make you feel drowsy and inattentive lest the arousing Gospel should awaken you. O my Hearers, shun the ignorance which fosters false peace and the false peace which would make you content without the knowledge of God!

The devil greatly rejoices because in these days so many ministers do not preach the GospelSatan is glad if he can poison the stream at the fountainhead! He rejoices if he can make the preacher of the Gospel a mere moral essayist, or a talker of his own inventions, for then those who go to hear him will be in no danger of being driven by trouble of mind to fly to Christ. I pray you, if you are wrapped in a peace that will not bear the light of day, bestir yourselves and escape from your perilous condition!

With many, however, it is not so much ignorance as thoughtlessness. Multitudes of persons know, if they would know, but they make no use of their knowledge for they never think. What a pity to perish forever from lack of consideration! A man has a letter given to him. He puts it in his pocket and does not open it. He goes out tomorrow for his days pleasure and he promises himself that he will open the letter on Tuesday, when the Bank Holiday is over. Suppose in that letter there should be a warning of some plot against his life, or information of his mother being at the point of death, or of the sudden illness of a favorite child? What will he say to himself if he opens that letter too late? The Bible is to many a man Gods unopened letter. Alas, how little do men search the Scriptures! If they do read them, they do it mechanically and do not think over their warnings.

Why will not men think? Thoughtlessness is one of Satans great nets in which he entangles many. If the devil can keep you from thinking, he will keep you from believing! If he can keep you in the giddy whirl of vicious pleasure, or even of idle levity, he can make sure of you. Possibly he can effect his purpose by getting you absorbed in politics, or parish matters, or science, or business. Little does he care which, so long as he can draw you off from thinking of God and of your soul and of eternal things. Oh, that I could draw a mighty bow and shoot some piercing shaft which would go over the wall and carry death to that traitor, False-Peace! How gladly would I blow a blast most loud and break the spell of the Father of Lies and bring you from under his fatal fascination!

This peace, in many cases, is also the result of carnal security. Men say, Well, well. We have not been much troubled yet and why should we care? We have lived in sin and we have not suffered for it. In fact, we have prospered through our contempt of scruples. Of old, men said, Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were. And today they cry, No deluge of fire has broken out upon us. These Christians say that the earth and all the works of men will be burned up and the very elements will melt with fervent heat! But we see no likelihood of it! In the heavens there is no sign of the Son of Manno cloud, no Great White Throneno token of the Judgment! Everything goes on calmly enoughwhy need we disturb ourselves?

Thus, like the sluggard in the Proverbs, they ask for a little more slumber. They are willingly ignorant that once upon a time, in the olden days, it was so upon this earth and men married and were given in marriage. And they ate and drank and were drunkenand as it was told them, so it happenedfor the Flood came and swept them all away! When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them. Beware, O men of this generation, lest this happen unto you, also, and the deluge of fire be upon you before you have escaped to Christ who alone is the Ark of souls! Will things always be as they have been? Can you be

sure of it? Are you not warned that it will not be so? Your eyes are not so clear as once they were! Your limbs are not so vigorous as once they were. If there is no change in the world, there is a great change in you during the last few years!

Before tomorrows sun has risen you may lie upon the bed of death! Therefore, I pray you, set it not to your seal that you have much goods laid up for many yearsfor this night your soul may be required of you. In a moment shall you be troubledthe Avenger shall leap through the window, though you think you have made fast the doorand you shall not escape. O Sirs, shall not my voice disturb your wicked slumbers, or must you sleep on till the trumpet shall awaken you, not to hope, but to condemnation? Soon shall He come who now would save you, but then must condemn you to the place of everlasting banishment! O Lord, have mercy upon those who are bewitched by carnal security! Break the enchantments of the deceiver.

Some, again, have a peace that comes of superstition. Well, they say, we know that this is true which has been spoken, but it does not bear upon us. We are all rightwe were made members of Christ, children of God and heirs of the kingdom of Heaven in our infant baptism! We have been confirmed and we have partaken of the holy communion. We have attended our church, or we have gone to our meeting-house with much regularity. Therefore we feel that for us there is a sure hope. O Souls, beware of saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these. Joab, in the day when Solomon executed the vengeance of God against him, instead of confessing his fault and seeking mercy, hoped for safety in the sanctuary and therefore stood with his hands upon the horns of the altar.

The tidings came to the king, He is by the altar. But the stern sentence was given, Fall upon him, and bury him. And so he perished in the Holy Place where Gods sacrifice was known to be offered. So will you die if you do not trust in the Lord Jesuseven though your hands should lie upon your Baptism and your Lords Supper. No outward performance can enable you to dispense with inward repentance and faith. If your heart is not right with God you shall perish with the sacramental bread in your mouth and go from the baptismal waters to the fires of Hell! Beware of the peace which is drawn from the stagnant pool of superstitionit will carry death into your soul.

Alas, there is a peace which does not lie in believing too much, but in believing too little! Unbelief brings false peace to thousands. If Satan can persuade you that, after all, these things are not so. If he can lead you to disbelieve your Bible. If he can lead you to think that there is no God, or that, if there is a God, He takes no account of men and will never call them to judgmentthen the arch-deceiver will make sure of you and keep his goods in peace! I charge you, beware of that peace which is founded upon the denial of those Truths of God which your own conscience teaches you. Sin must be punished and if your peace is built upon the supposition that it will not be so, your foundation is even less to be depended upon than the sand. Hazard not your soul upon a lie!

I fear that many are kept in peace through companionship. Hand joins in handthe man would be troubled, but he meets his old friend who is a skepticand he laughs his fears out of him. The woman gets home and talks with what she calls, her friends, who are as godless as herself and she is by their tattle confirmed in her carelessness. O Sirs, your friends cannot deliver you if you lose your souls through their means! Choose rather as friends those who roughly tell you solemn truths than those who with excess of sweetness would flatter you to your everlasting undoing.

Once more, dear Friends, I say thisand may God make it come with power to somepeace caused by the devil is often the awful prelude of the last tremendous storm. One who described to me the earthquake in the south of France said, That morning when we rose, I never saw more lovely weather. Everything smiled deliciously across the blue Mediterranean and the azure sky was without a cloud. Suddenly, without a moments warning, a tremor seized the earth and there was a great cry of men and women in their fright. It usually happens, before tremendous convulsions of Nature, that there is an ominous calm. You must have noticed, a few minutes before a storm, how awfully still everything becomes. The air is motionless, the birds sit mute upon the boughnot a leaf is stirring, all is silent expectation.

Deceive not yourselfwith wings of flame the tempest is hurrying on and while you speak it bursts upon youcasting all things into confusion and amazement. Before the last dread hurricane of doom a soul may be asleep and all around it there may be a deep calm. Beware of the treacherous peace! Beware of insensibility! Your unfeeling state should warn you that you are given over to destruction. In the higher and colder latitudes, when men feel a sleepiness stealing over them, their companions stir them up and rub them and will not let them slumberfor to sleep is to wake no more. The man pleads, Let me sleep a half-an-hour and I shall be so refreshed. Alas, if he sleeps he shall do ill, for he will grow rigid in the death which frost brings to one! Go on, wise friends, and compassionately shake him! Hurry him to and fro, or rub him vigorously till he grows sore!

I cannot get hold of you at this present hour with my hands, nor would I wish to give you a bodily shaking, but oh, that I could do this spiritually and wake you up! I cannot leave you to sleep your soul into perdition! Come, Woman, you must bestir yourself, you must quit this fatal stupor, this deadly peace or else you will pass away from the world of hope, and wake up in the dungeon of despair! I have now spoken as much as I think wise upon this terrible subjectmay the Holy Spirit bless it to you all! It is not my speakingit is your thinking which is now needed. The Lord move you to holy thought!

II. Now we come to the second part of our discourse upon which we hope to speak with far greater pleasure. The Psalmist says, The Lord will bless His people with peace. Here we have THE LORDS PEACE. I trust

numbers of you are now enjoying it! A man of God lay dying, but he was very calmmorehe was supremely happy! He filled the house with cheerfulness. All who came to see him, knowing that he was about to die, as he well knew himself, went away edified and comforted by the interview with this thrice-happy man.

One said to him, Friend, how is it that you have such peace? He answered, I can see no ground or cause for it save thisit is written, You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Was not that a satisfactory reply? There is a weight of argument in it. If your mind is stayed on God He will keep you in perfect peace. You could not keep yourself in perfect peace in the hour of tribulation, or faintness, or decaybut the Lord can keep you. When heart and flesh fail, God will be your joy! Then shall you receive Christs legacy Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. I love that text because of the double view it gives of the Peacemaker. Here is a dying Savior making His will and saying, Peace I leave with you. Here is the living Savior stretching out His hands and saying, My peace I give unto you. He has not only left it in His will, but He has given it with His hands.

Now, Beloved, the peace that we should desire to possess is, first of all, a peace which is a blessingThe Lord will bless His people with peace. False peace is a curse, but to be soundly at peace with God is an unalloyed blessing and it brings no sorrow with it. To fall back upon the Fathers bosom and say, I know that He Himself loves me and I know that I love Himto look up to Jesus and to say, He loved me and gave Himself for meto feel the moving of the Holy Spirit and to yield ourselves up to His influencesthis is peace unspeakable! To have no quarrel with God. No, to have no difference between His will and your ownthis is a delightful experience!

Men may hate me, but if my God loves me, what does it matter? I may feel the cut of sharp, ungenerous words, but if my God speaks peace unto me, who can make trouble? He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints. This is joy, indeed! Do you know it? It is not only a blessing in itself, but it is a blessing in its consequences. There is no man so humble as the man that is at perfect peace with Godhe marvels at the blessing he enjoys! There is no man so grateful. There is no man so courageous. There is no man so little affected by the world. There is no man who bears suffering so patiently. There is no man who is so ready for Heaven as the man who is at perfect peace with God and knows it! The peace of God, which passes all understanding, is a sacred guard to the soulit shall keep our hearts and minds by Jesus Christ.

The value of peace as keeping the heart and mind is exceedingly great. It wards off all sorts of evils and preserves us unto the day of the Lords appearing. The more you enjoy peace with God the better. False peace is as stupefying and deadly as opium. Even the smallest drop of this sleeping mixture may be mischievous to the spirit and you may soon imbibe so much of this false confidence that it may deaden the conscience and create a fatal hardness of heart. But of Gods own peace you may drink to the full and no harm will come of it! You may be as happy in the Lord as possible and be all the better for it. Get strong faith and even full assurance and it will never make you idleit will be a blessing and only a blessing to you all your days. The Lord will bless His people with peace.

Note, next, that this peace only comes from God. The lord will bless His people with peace. You cannot get that peace apart from the Lord himselfit is of no use to try to work it out yourself. You say, I will get better. I will keep the Law, I will do this and do thatyou will never dig peace out of the soil of your own works. You cannot spin peace out of your own heart, as a spider spins her web. You must go to the Lord for peace and there is only one way in which you can go to HimJesus says, I am the way. Go to the Father through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit! Trust the Father, rest in Christ, yield to the Holy Spirit and you shall have the peace that God gives!

O dear Hearers, if you could come and talk with me and I could comfort you, it might be of no use to you. If you could go to some full-fledged priest and he could absolve you, it might only be one of the darkest of delusions. But if you go to God and get His peace, that peace is solid and abidingit is founded on eternal Truth! It is guaranteed by the God of holiness! It is judged to be sound by the Judge of all the earth! Here we have peace from lips that cannot lie, peace from a heart which cannot change, peace through the blood which has made a full atonement! I pray you, seek this peace and make sure of it. You see how spiritual it is, for you must come to God for it and you can only come to Him in spirit and in truth. You see how little it depends upon externals, upon chapel-going, or church-goingit is only by a spiritual approach to God that this blessing can be obtained. Come to the Lord and Giver of peace. Come to Jesus who is our peace! Oh, may the Divine Spirit lead you to come to Jesus now, at this moment, for in coming to Him you shall receive rest! Plead now this promiseThe Lord will bless His people with peace.

This peace comes only to His own people The Lord will bless His people with peace. He will never bless those with peace who remain in rebellion against Him. The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Say, are you one of His people? Are you loyal to the Prince Emmanuel? If so, the Lord has bought you with His precious blood and you are His. The Lord will bless His bloodbought people and cause them to be His by power as well as by price. Do you rest in Christ alone? Is the atoning Sacrifice your souls great hope? If so, you have been begotten again unto that lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and the Lord will bless with peace His people who have risen with His own dear Son.

If you have the faith of Gods elect, you are one of His elect! If you have done with self, the world and sin as the main desire of your heart, you are among His people. If you yield yourself to God to live unto Him, then you are one of His people and the Lord will bless you with peace. The more closely you cling to the Lord Jesus, the more clear and full will your peace be. Do you belong to Him so that He can call you one of His people?

Well, says one, I belong to the Church. That is a secondary matter. Many are in the visible Church who do not belong to God. Oh, but I belong to such-and-such a place of worship well known for spiritual life. So you may, and yet not be one of the Lords people, for tares grow among the best of the wheat.

Say, O Heart, do you trust alone to Jesus the Savior? Have you given yourself over to the Lord, to be your own no longer? Are you affianced unto Christ, your all to be His and yourself to be His bride? Then the Lord will bless you with abundance of peace. Here is a practical statement, see if it is not true. Notice, again, that this is peace in the time of tempest and peace after storm. Read over again this 29th Psalmit is the Psalm of the thunderstorm. Hear how the voice of God thunders through it from end to end. The great cedars of Lebanon are split, the mountains are moved, the wilderness of Kadesh is shaken and the trembling hinds drop their young in their fright! The whole earth rocks beneath the tremendous Voice and is lit up with flames of the lightning of the Lord. Yet the Psalm ends with those gracious wordsThe Lord will bless His people with peace.

Some of us enjoy our greatest peace when the Lord is abroad and the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies. We feel a rapture as we perceive that our Father is very near and is speaking so that we hear His voice. In spiritual storms that voice is our comfort and after the tempests are over the Lord speaks a sweet hush to the hearts of His children. He allays our fears while He whispers, It is I, be not afraid. Brothers and Sisters, you will have many a tempest between here and Heaven, but before the tempest, through the tempest and after the tempest, The Lord will bless His people with peace.

As I turned my text over last night, it seemed to me to be a very wonderful passage. It is a sort of revolving text, like a gun which is always loaded and may be perpetually discharged. It is a flowing fountain, ever beginning with fresh streams. The Lord will bless His people with peace. We have had peace with God those 40 years, yes, but we have a promise of peace for today. Suppose we should live another 40 years? We shall still have the same promiseThe Lord will bless His people with peace. I should like an everlasting check from some millionaire running thusSo often as this check is presented at the bank, pay the bearer what he asks. Few persons possessed of such a document would fail to put in an appearance at the bank! We should be regular visitors!

O you children of God, you have such a promissory note in the text before you! The Lord has endless, boundless peace within Himself and when you have long enjoyed peace with Him you may go to Him again and say, Lord, renew my peace. I am troubled, but You are unmovedbless me with Your peace. When you are rich and find that riches bring cares, bring these to your God who will bless His people with peace. When you are poor, do the same. When children are born to you and with them come family cares, take the new burden to the Lord, for He gives peace. And if the children die and you weep as your young shoots are cut off, still turn to the Lord and believe that He will bless you with peace. If you grow sick, yourself, and the tokens of a deadly disease appear upon you, still be calm, for He will bless you with peace. When you must go upstairs and lie down upon your last bed to rise no more, then, even then, the Lord will bless you with His ever-living peace! And when you wake up at the sound of the last trump the Lord will still keep you in perfect peace.

There remained a rest for the people of God. This is always the heritage of His believing onesBeing justified by faith, we have peace with God. Whatever shall befall our race according to the dark page of prophecy. Whatever of terror shall break forth throughout the endless ages of the yet-to-be, the Lord will bless His people with peace! Take this Truth of God home to your heart and live upon it and you may dwell perpetually in the Presence of the King. I have done when I have said the following words. First, let us enquire whether we are resting on a false or a true foundation. Am I addressing a stranger to this Tabernacle, here today for the first time? I would not wish to do you anything but real good and yet I should like to search you to the foundation.

Is your hope built on a false peace? Then I would like to overthrow it and leave no stone upon another. Refuges of lies must be swept away before refuges of Divine Grace will be sought. If you take shelter behind a bowing wall and a tottering fence, I would desire to find a hand towards sending it over, for it will go before long, and it had better go while you can seek another shelter. You will never be on a right foundation until you are off the wrong one. As long as your happiness and peace are false and yet are fair to look upon, you will not seek true peace! Therefore, I would break the idols to shivers! Will you look to this? Will you give over being too secure? May I ask you to accept nothing as a ground of comfort which is not true?

Do not believe in a security which is only of temporary value. Believe eternal Truth and seek eternal life. Do not wrap yourself about with a comfort which you dare not prove and test. If you dare not examine it to the very bottom, away with it! If it will not bear the closest search, leave it to those who can afford to run great risks, for you cannot. If you dare not think about your state, you can be sure that there is something wrong with it. Walk in the light of God and have no fellowship with unfruitful hopes which are works of darkness. May I entreat you, when you have laid these things to heart, to seek at once to have close dealings with God? Do not say, I will begin searching the Scriptures. That is a good thing in itself, but if you rest in Scripture reading and do not go to God Himself, your Bible may be made a stumbling stone for your soul!

Do not say, I shall attend more religious services. This, also, may be well, but religious services will ruin you if you put them in the place of personal dealings with God! Your living soul has personally to do with the living God. Come to HIM this morning if you have never been before. Come at once. Delay no more! Do you shrink? Do you want an introduction? Do you need a friend to go with you to Heavens high court? Behold, the Son of God waits to be your Mediator and Intercessor! Come to the Father through the Son and you will in no wise be cast out! Get a hope, O

my Hearer, which will last you to the last! Get a hope which you can die with! I charge you by the living God and by Christ Jesus, who will surely come to judge the quick and dead, get a confidence which will endure the test of death, judgment, and eternity!

Seek to have boldness in the day of judgment. No small matter this. Make sure work for the day of trial. How can you be sure unless your trust is built upon the Foundation which God Himself has laid? Behold the All-Sufficient Sacrifice! Rest in the Divine Expiation, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. But can we be sure? cries one. There are thousands of us who possess the assurance of a child-like faith. We could not rest a minute if we were not sure in such a matter! I could not be content with a salvation which did not give me certainty in my soul, for sin is real and I must have real pardonmy trouble of heart is real and I must have real confidence in a Savior! My inward sinfulness is real and I must have a real new birth unto holiness.

In the day when I took hold of Christ Jesus my Lord, I found in Him such real peace that I knew and was persuaded that He is able to save. If any call me a dogmatist, I plead guilty to the charge. I must dogmatize when I am sure! I cannot live without being certain! Doubt in this matter is death! I accept my Lords Atonement! I rest on it and I find peace to my soul. If, but, perhapsthose are daggers in my heart! Where is the comfort to any soul in what he does not know to be true? The sap and substance of consolation lie in the certainty of the truth believed. If you are not sure, never rest till you are! Once know assuredly that God is good to Israel and that He will bless His people with peace and then go on to enjoy as much of that peace as your soul can hold!

Sing both by day and by night. Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, Rejoice. As for me, I know whom I have believed and the resolve of my soul is to magnify my Lord, world without end

**Down from above the blessed Dove   
Is come into my breast   
To witness Your eternal love,   
And give my spirit rest.   
My God, Ill praise You while I live,   
And praise You when I die,   
And praise You when I rise again,   
And to eternity.**

***PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONPsalm 73, 29.*** HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK734, 715, 726. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #612 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE STRONG ONE DRIVEN OUT BY A STRONGER ONE   
NO. 613

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 5, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divides   
his spoils. He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathers not with Me scatters. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest. And finding none, he says, I will return unto my house from where I came out. And when he comes, he finds it swept and garnished. Then goes he and takes to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man   
is worse than the first.   
Luke 11:21-26.**

THE Lord Jesus is ever in direct and open antagonism to Satan. I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed, has been most emphatically fulfilled. Christ has never tolerated any truce or parley with the Evil One and never will. Whenever Christ strikes a blow at Satan, it is a real blow and not a feint and is meant to destroy, not to amend. He never asks Satans help to subdue Satannever fights evil by evilHe uses the weapons which are not carnal, but mighty to the pulling down of strongholds. And He uses them ever with this intention not to dally with Satan, but to cut up his empire, root and branch. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

There is a deadly, implacable, infinite, eternal hatred between Christ and that sin of which Satan is the representative. No compromise can ever be thought of, no quarter will ever be allowed. The Lord will never turn from His purpose to bruise Satan under His feet and to cast him into the lake of fire. Therefore there was nothing more libelous than the assertion of certain Pharisees in Christs day that He cast out devils through Beelzebub, the Prince of devils! O base suggestion that the Lord of Glory was in league with the dunghill deity, the Prince of devils! He never fights the Lords battles with the devils weapons! He has not the most distant affiance with evil! It is not possible that He should be the friend and patron of that spirit of unhallowed charity which for the sake of peace would give tolerance to error.

No, Christ never allies Himself with Satan to advance the kingdom of

God. He comes against him as a strong man armed, determined to fight until He wins a decisive victory. We shall observe this more clearly as we open up the passage now before us. Our text presents us with a picture of man in his sinful state. Then it gives us a representation of man for a time reformed, but eventually subjected to the worst forms of evil. And it also shows us a graphic portrait of man, entirely conquered by the power of

the great Redeemer.   
I. First, WE SHALL ATTENTIVELY LOOK AT THE PICTURE OF MAN AS   
HE IS IN A STATE OF NATURE. When a strong man armed keeps his   
palace, his goods are in peace. Observe that although mans heart was   
intended to be the Throne of God, it has now become the palace of Satanwhereas Adam was the obedient servant of the Most High and his   
body was a temple for Gods love, now, through the Fall, we have become   
the servants of sin and our bodies have become the workshops of Satan. The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. This spirit   
is called a strong man and truly so he iswho can stand against him?  
Like the monster in the book of Job, we may say of him, Lay your hand   
upon him, remember the battle, do no more. Behold, the hope of him is in   
vain! Shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? Though a   
thousand Philistines are smitten hip and thigh with a great slaughter by   
Samson, the avenger of Israel, yet the strong man falls a victim to the   
stronger fiend.   
That mighty hero, though he could rend a lion, was no match for the   
lion of the pit who overcame him to his shame and hurt. Solomon, the   
wisest of men, was outwitted by Satan, for his heart was led astray by the   
arch-tempter. Even he who was the sire of men was overthrown by this  
dread enemy in the early days of innocence and happiness. He is so   
strong that if all of us should combine against him, Satan would laugh at  
us as Leviathan laughs at the shaking of the spear. Strong he is, not simply as possessing force, but in the sense of cunning. He knows how to   
adapt his temptations to our besetting sins. He discovers fitting times in  
which to assail us. He understands that there is a time when kings go   
forth to battle and he is ever ready for the fight.   
He is a good swordsman. He knows every cut and guard and thrust and   
parry and he knows our weak places and the joints in our harness. Christians who have ever stood foot to foot with him will give him credit for  
thisthat he is strong, indeed. And unbelievers who have at any time   
sought to resist his power in their own strength have soon been made to  
feel that their strength was perfect weakness. He is a strong man with a   
vengeance! Oh, Christian, well is it for you that there is a stronger than   
hethe might of Satan would crush you to your ruin if it were not that   
the almightiness of Christ comes in to the rescue!   
It is said of this strong man, moreover, that he is armed. Truly the  
Prince of the power of the air is never without weapons. His principal  
weapon is the lie. The sword of Gods Spirit is the Truth, but the sword of   
the evil spirit is the lie. It was by falsehood that he overthrew our race at   
first and despoiled us of perfection. And it is with continued falsehoods, of  
which the lie is both the forger and the user, that he continues to destroy  
the souls of men. He will tell the sinner sometimes that he is too young to think of death and of eternal things. And when this weapon fails he will assure him that it is too late, for the day of Grace is over   
*He feeds our hopes with airy dreams.   
Or kills with slavish fear.   
And holds us still in wide extremes,   
Presumption, or despair.   
Now he persuades,   
How easy tis   
To walk the road to Heaven!   
Then he swells our sins and cries,   
They cannot be forgiven!   
Thus he supports his cruel throne   
By mischief and deceit,   
And drags the sons of Adam down   
To darkness and the pit.*   
He has a way of making the worse appear the better reason. He can put  
bitter for sweet and sweet for bittermake men believe that it is to their  
own advantage to do that which is causing their everlasting ruin. He can   
make men carry coals of fire in their bosoms and dream that they shall  
not be burned. He can make them dance upon the brink of Hell as though  
they were on the verge of Heaven. Alas, fools that we are, how readily do   
his lies prevail against us! Then he has the well-feathered arrows of  
pleasure. The strong man is armed with the lusts of the flesh. Dainty dalliances he offers to someoverflowing cups that sparkle to the eye he presents for others! Glittering wealth he gives to the avaricious and the   
trump of fame and all the smoke of applause he promises to others. Weapons? Why, I cannot attempt to mention all the war-like implements of the Prince of the power of the air. He can hurl fiery darts as thick   
as hail. His breath kindles coals and a flame goes out of his mouth. When   
he raises himself up the mighty are afraid. Bunyans half-inspired imagination pictured him thusNow the monster was hideous to behold. He   
was clothed with scales like a fish (and they are his pride). He had wings   
like a dragon, feet like a bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoke   
and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion.   
He is well armed at every point and he knows how to arm his slavethe   
sinner, too. He will plate him from head to foot with mail and put weapons   
into his hands against which the puny might of Gospel ministers and of  
human conscience can never prevail. Then we are told that he wears armorfor we read that the stronger warrior, takes from him all his armor  
wherein he trusted. Certain it is the evil spirit is well informed in that   
which is proof against all terrestrial steel. Prejudice, ignorance, evil educationall these are chain-armor with which Satan girds himself. A hard heart is the impenetrable breastplate which this evil spirit  
wears! A seared conscience becomes to him like leaves of brass. Living in   
sin is a helmet of iron. We know some who, through a long period of  
years, have harbored within them an evil spirit which seems to have no  
joints in its harness at all. It were as easy to draw blood from granite as to

reach some mens heartsthe demon who possesses them is not to be   
wounded by our artillery. His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a closed seal. His heart is as firm as a stoneyes, as hard as a piece   
of the nether millstone.   
We have preached at such men, prayed for them, spoken sharply, spoken tenderly, assaulted them from every quarter, wooed them with love   
Divine, thundered at them with the judgments of God and with the terrors   
of His Law. But the strong man is so completely mailed that as yet we   
have made no impression upon him whatever. When we have struck him   
with such a blow that he seemed to reel, yet the armor has been thick   
enough to save him from a deadly wound. The sword of him that strikes   
at him cannot hold, nor the spear, the dart, nor the coat of mail. He  
thinks of iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make   
him fleestones from slingshots are turned by him into stubble. The  
flakes of his flesh are joined togetherthey are firm in themselves. They   
cannot be moved.   
Notice, again, this strong manbesides being armed and plated with  
armoris very watchful. It is said, he keeps his palace. He keeps it like   
the faithful warden who with ceaseless tramp and sleepless eye holds   
watch upon the castle wall. He does not put on the armor to sleep in it.   
You may find sleeping saints, but never sleeping devils. The restless activity of fallen angels is something awful to contemplatethey rest not day   
nor nightbut like ravenous lions go about seeking their prey. When Satan enters a mans heart, he takes care to watch whenever there is the   
slightest chance of the Truth of God coming in and driving him from his   
throne.   
He puts a double guard on the person when he is under the sound of   
the Word. He will let you go to those places where the minister never attacks the conscience and never cries aloud against sinfor he feels that  
there his kingdom is not assailed. But wherever the true Gospel is  
preached and preached with Divine power, hosts of devils are sure to   
gather, Because, says Satan, there is danger to my dominions now. I  
will set a double garrison to protect my citadel against the attack of Gods   
Truth.  
Beware, O saints, when the Lord, the Holy Spirit, is working, for the   
great enemy is certain to be doubly active at such seasons! He keeps his   
goods. How would I delight to catch him unawares, but this leviathan is  
not to be taken with a hook, nor is his jaw to be bored through with a   
thorn. We may drop a warning to the sinner here, we may speak the passing word of exhortation there, we may stand in the corner of yonder street   
and declare salvation, or we may occupy the pulpit in Jesus namewe   
may use all the means which ingenuity can devisebut Satan is always   
as prompt as we are, having his unclean birds always ready to carry away   
any seeds that may be scattered upon the soil.   
While men sleeps he sows tares, but he never slumbers himself. As   
Hugh Latimer used to say, he is the most industrious bishop in England.   
Other bishops may neglect their dioceses, but Satan, never! He is always   
making visitations and going from place to place upon his evil business to   
watch after his black sheep. The sinners heart must be carried away by  
storm if it is ever taken, for there is no hope of taking the Evil One by surprise. We have in the text a good reason given why Satan thus watches   
over the man whose heart he inhabitsbecause he considers the man to   
be his propertyhe keeps his goods.   
They are not his in justice. Whatever goods there are in the house of  
manhood must belong to God who built the house and who intended to   
tenant it. But Satan makes up a claim and calls everything in the man his  
property. The mans memory he makes a storehouse for ill words and bad   
songs. The mans judgment he perverts so that the scales and weights are   
false. The mans love he sets on fire with coals of Hell and his imagination  
he dazzles with foul delusions. All the powers of the man, Satan claimsI   
will have his mouthhe shall swear for me! I will have his eyesthey  
shall wander after vanity! I will have his feetthey shall take him to the   
place of sinful amusement! I will have his handshe shall work for me   
and be my slave!   
The heart is hard and the conscience stupefied and therefore *Sin like a raging tyrant sits   
Upon his flinty throne,   
And all thats good is crushed to death,   
Beneath this heart of stone.*   
He claims the whole man to be his own. And it is amazing how readily his   
claim is allowed! Men fancy music in the chains with which Satan binds   
them and hug the fetters which he hangs upon them! Men cheerfully obey   
the Prince of Darkness and yet it is hard, ah, hard indeed, to bring the followers of Jesus to yield up their members in full obedience to the sweet  
Prince of Peace.   
Nor is this all! Satan not only claims possession, but he claims sovereignty! You perceive it is said, his palace. A palace is usually the abode   
of a kingso Satan considers himself a great king when he dwells in the   
human heart. Divine Sovereignty has ever been the great target of Satans   
attacks, because he aspires to set up his own infernal sovereignty. His   
sway over men is imperial and his government despotic. When he takes   
possession of the human heart he says to his servant, Go, and he goes.   
And to his captive, Do this, and he does it. He will not be regulated and   
ruled by reason, but he will have his own will obeyed in all its madness of  
rebellion. His declaration is made in apish imitation of the great God.   
Cannot I do as I will with my own. I am, and there is none beside me. To what extravagances of sovereignty will not Satan go with men! He   
will allure them to drunkennessnor is that enoughhe will hurry them   
into delirium tremens. He will drive them out of their senses and urge  
them to lay violent hands upon themselvesno, he often covers his victims with their own blood shed by themselves! An old preacher took for   
his text, When the devils entered into the swine the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea and perished in the waters. One of   
his points was, The devil drives his hogs to a bad market. And there is  
much truth in the rough assertionwhen he gets into men there is no  
telling where they will go.   
Another point was, They run hard whom the devil drives. Unto what   
extremities of sottish folly, cruelty and self-injury will not men go when   
once Satan gains possession of them? Like Baals priests they are cutting themselves with knives! Like the Gadarene demoniac dwelling in tombs and wearing no clothes! Like the child in the Gospel sometimes cast into the fire and then into the watersuch are men when the devil rules them. No king could ever walk in his palace and say, All this is mine, with such pride as Satan when he walks through the heart of man! He can boastingly cry, This man will fall down and worship me! He will sacrifice his comfort, his very life to me! He will drain my cups and not refuse the poison in the dregs! He will go upon my service and not ask me whether   
death is to be the everlasting wages!   
Oh, that God had such willing servants, such joyful martyrs as those   
who obey the devil! You may see the devils martyrs in every gin palace  
ragged, haggard and diseased. You may see them in the early morning  
shivering till the time shall come when they shall drink another dram of   
Hell-draught. You may see them in every moonlit street, waiting in the   
cold, damp mists of night to be offered up upon his altar to prostitute   
both body and soul to his unhallowed worship. You may see them in every  
hospital rotting into their gravestheir bones full of disease and their very  
blood polluted with a filthy taint of loathsomeness. You may see them, I   
say, all eager to sacrifice soul and body as a whole burnt offering to be  
wholly consumed by the infernal firethat they may serve Satan with   
their whole heart! Oh, that we were half as faithful to God as the devils   
servants are to him. The heart is well called Apollyons palace, for he   
reigns with absolute dominion there. O eternal God, drive him out! I must not leave this picture until you have observed that it is said,  
while he keeps his palace, his goods are in peace. This is the most fearful sign in the whole affair. The man is quite undisturbedconscience   
does not prick himwhy should it? God does not alarm himwho is God,   
that he should obey His voice? Thoughts of Hell never disturb him.   
Peace, peace, says Satan, it is well with you nowleave these bugbears   
to those who believe in them. The wrath of God, which abides on him,  
never frets him! When men are mortifying, they feel no pain in the mortified member. Men who are stupefied with opium may be naked but they  
are not cold. They may have empty stomachs, but they are not hungry.  
They may be diseased in body but they do not feel the tormentthey are   
drunk and know not their misery!   
And so it is with the most of carnal mennothing awakens them. The   
sermon is listened to with a remark upon the style of the speaker, but the   
Truth of God is neglected. A judgment comesthe funeral bell tollsa   
tear or two may be shed but they are soon wiped away and the man goes   
his way, like the dog to his vomit and the sow that was washed to her  
wallowing in the mire. I know nothing of what it is to be troubled in conscience, says one. I am quite easyI am as jolly as the days are long. I   
dare say you areI wish you were not! If you were dissatisfied with your   
old master, there would be some hope that you would leave him and return to your Fathers housebut so long as you are content with the   
world and with the Prince who governs it, you will go on, on, on, to your  
own destruction!   
Satan does with men as the sirens are fabled to have done with mariners. They sat upon the rocks and chanted songs so harmonious that no mariner, who once heard the sound, could ever resist the impulse to steer his ship towards them. So each vessel voyaging that way was wrecked upon the rocks through their disastrous, but enchanting strain. Such is Satans voicehe lures to eternal ruin with the sweetest strains of infernal minstrelsy. He can play sonatas so inimitably enchanting in their harmony that it is not in poor mortal flesh and blood, unaided by the Spirit of

God, to stand against their thrilling witchery.   
This is the melodious notePeace, peace, peace, peace. O Sinner, if   
you were not a fool you would stop up your ears to this treacherous lie!  
Forever blessed is that Sovereign Grace which has saved us from the enchantments of this destroyer! The tenant of the heart is called an unclean  
spirit. He is unclean, notwithstanding all the peace he gives you. I pray   
you not flatter yourself to the contrary. He is ever the same, unchanged,  
unchangeable. Perhaps you tell me that you are not subject to any uncleanness. You say you do not drink nor swear, nor lie. But remember, it   
is unclean to be unreconciled to God! It is unclean to be a stranger to   
Christ! It is unclean to disobey God who created you. And above all it is  
unclean not to love the Redeemer whose most precious blood has delivered His people from their sins. At his best the devil is no better than a   
devil and the heart in which he dwells is no better than a den for a traitor   
to hide in.   
Thus I have given you an outline interpretation of the textit would   
need much time to fill up and bring out the whole of its meaning. II. Now let us notice THE PARTIAL REFORMATION HERE DESCRIBED.   
When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry  
places, seeking rest. And finding none, he says, I will return unto my   
house from where I came out. And when he comes, he finds it swept and   
garnished. Then goes he and takes to him seven other spirits more wicked  
than himself. And they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that   
man is worse than the first.   
Observe, then, that in the case before us the unclean spirit goes out of   
his own free will. He is not turned outthere is no conflictthe house still  
remains his own property for it is written at the end of the twenty-fourth   
verse, I will return unto my house from where I came out. He retires   
from his palace of his own free will, intending to return at his leisure or   
pleasure. There are some persons who appear to be converted who think   
they are so and therefore make a profession and are cheerfully received   
into the Christian Church because their outward life gives evidence of a   
very great and remarkable change.   
I could now picture some who, to my great grief, come under my tearful   
observation. Some who were once with us, but have long since arrived at   
the last end which was worse than the first. When the unclean spirit   
goes out of a man he becomes quite different from what he used to be.  
Very likely the shop that was open on the Sunday is now shut up. He  
turns his footsteps to the place where Gods people meet for worship. He   
begins to pray, even sets up family prayer. He attends Prayer Meetings, feels some sort of enjoyment in the excitement of religion. He goes where the saints go and to a great extent in life he acts as they act. The unclean spirit is fairly gone out of the man and he is another manthough not a   
new creature in Christ Jesus.   
But I have said there was no struggle about it. It was suddenly that the   
spirit went out and the man jumped into religion. There was no repentance, no conviction, no struggling against depravity, no weeping before  
the Lord in prayer and no looking up to the Crucified Savior and reading  
pardon in His wounds. There was no agonizing struggle after holiness, no  
wrestling with eviljoy came suddenly and the man thought himself  
saved. The man was a sinner yesterday and he appears to be a saint todaynobody knows how. You talk to him about the work of the Spirit in   
his soul, convincing him of sin, breaking him with the hammer of the Law  
or by the power of the Cross, pounding him in pieces, compelling him to  
feel that his righteousness is filthy rags.   
He does not understand you. The unclean spirit is gone out of the man   
and that is all. Why does the evil spirit leave a man for a time? Has he not  
some hellish purpose in view? Certainly he has! I think it is often because   
he feels if he does not go out he will be driven out, and he thinks that by   
giving way for a time he will satisfy the conscience till he gets it lulled to   
sleep faster than ever. Thus he will stoop to conquer, retreat to draw his   
opponent into an ill position. He will allow his throne to shake so that he   
may reestablish his dominion permanently. Moreover, he thinks that by   
letting the man indulge in a little religion for a time, and then turn aside   
from it he will make him permanently skeptical so that he will hold him   
fast by the iron chain of infidelity and drag him down to Hell with that   
hook in his jaws.   
Now, after a time it appears that the evil spirit returned. He could find   
no rest for himself except in the hearts of the wicked and therefore he  
came back. There is no opposition to his entrance, the door is not   
lockedor if it is he has the key. He comes inthere is no tenant, no man   
in possessionno other proprietor. He looks round and cries, Here is my  
house. I left it when I took my walks abroad and I have come back and   
here it is ready for me. In due time the devil comes back to those persons   
who are reformed but not renewedwho are changed but not made new  
creatures in Christ Jesus.  
But what does the devil see? First of all he sees the place to be empty. If   
it had been full he could not have entered again. If Jesus Christ had been  
at the door there would have been a very terrible struggle for a little time,  
but it would have ended in Satan being driven away in disgrace. But it is   
empty and therefore he quietly resumes his sway. The devil shouts his,  
Halloa! and there is an echo through every room, but no intruder starts  
up. Is Christ here? No answer. He goes outside and he looks at the lintel, for Christs mark is sure to be there if Jesus is within. No mark of   
blood on the post. Christ is not here, he says. It is empty, I will make  
myself at home. If Jesus had been there, though He had been hidden in a   
closet, yet when He came out He would claim possession and drive out the traitor and say, Be gone! This is no place for you. I have bought it with  
My blood and I mean to possess it forever.   
But it is empty and so Satan fills it with stores of evil. The next thing   
the fiend notices is that it is sweptas one says, Swept, but never  
washed. Sweeping takes away the loose dirtwashing takes away all the   
filth. O to be washed in Jesus blood! Here is a man whose house is  
sweptthe loose sins are gone. He is not a drunkard, there is a pledge  
over the mantelpiece. He is no longer lustfulhe hates that sinor says   
he does, which is as much as the devil wants him to do. The place is   
swept so tidy, so neat, you would not know him to be the same man as he   
used to be. And he himself is so proud to think he has got his house so  
clean and he stands up at the threshold as he meets the devil with a,   
Good morning!   
And he says I am not as other men are, I am neither an extortioner,   
nor a drunkard! Nor even as that Christian over yonder who is not half   
what he ought to benor a fraction as consistent as I am. And as the   
devil looks round and finds the place swept, he finds it garnished, too.   
The man has bought some pictureshe has not real faith, but he has a   
fine picture of it over the fireplace. He has no love to the Cross of Christ,   
but he has a very handsome crucifix hanging on the wall. He has no Divine Grace of the Spirit, but he has a fine vase of flowers on the tableof   
other peoples experiences and other peoples gracesand they smell tolerably sweet. There is a fireplace without fire, but there is one of the most   
handsome ornaments for the fireplace that was ever bought for money. It is swept and garnished. Oh, the garnished people I have met!  
garnished, sometimes, with almsgivingat other times with long-winded   
prayers! Garnished with the profession of zeal and the pretense of reverence! You will find a zealous Protestantoh, so zealouswho would go   
into fits at the sign of a cross and yet will commit fornication! Do you   
think such a case impossible? I know such a case. You find persons   
shocked because another boiled a teakettle on a Sunday, or insured his   
life, or assisted at a bazaar, who will cheat and draw the eye teeth out of  
an orphan child, if they could get a sixpence by it! They are swept and   
garnished.   
Walk in, Ladies and Gentlemen! Did you ever see a house so delightfully furnished as this? How eleganthow tasteful! Just sobut men may   
be damned tastefully and go to Hell respectably just as well as they can in  
a vulgar and debauched fashion! You see the whole, how it ends. Satan is  
very pleased to find the place as it is, and thinking that this is too good for  
one, he goes abroad and asks in seven of his friends worse than himself  
for some devils are worse than others. And they come in and hold high  
holiday in the mans soul. What do we mean by that? Why, we mean that   
such persons do really become more wicked, more hardened, more ungodly than they were before they professed to be Christians! It is really a shocking thing that if you want to find a thoroughbred,   
out-and-out transgressor, you must find one who once made a profession  
of religion! When Satan wants a servant who will do anything and ask no  
questionswho will swallow camels as well as gnatshe finds one that once stood high in the Christian Church. If he can find one who used to sing Christs song, that is the throat to sing the devils song! If he can find one who once sat at the sacramental table, he will say, This is the man to sit at the head of my banquets and conduct my feasts for me. These renegades, these traitors, these Ahithophels, these Judases, these men who have known the Truth of God and have been once, in a manner, enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gifts and the powers of the world to come in a certain senseand yet fall awaythese become like salt that is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghilleven men cast   
them out!   
They are trees twice dead, plucked up by the rootswandering stars for  
whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Have I any such in

this place, any who were once swept and garnished, into whom Satan has   
returned? My Friend, from my soul I pity you! What will be your portion?   
No common Hell will be yours! Remember, there are reserved places in the   
pit and those are reserved for such as you are. Read the letter of Jude and   
you will there find that there are some for whom are reserved, the blackness of darkness forever.   
That is your case and this will be the aggravation of ityou sat at the   
Masters Table and you must now drink the cup of fire! You preached in   
Christs courts but you must now give forth a dolorous sermon concerning  
your own apostasy! You sang Gods praises onceyou must now howl out   
the Miserere of the damned! You had a glimpse of Heavenyou shall now   
have a dread insight into Hell! You talked about eternal life, you shall now  
feel eternal deathplunged in waves of flame, never to rise again, never to   
hope, never even to die, for to die were bliss. How dreadful shall your case   
be! In this world seven times worse than before, but in the world to come,  
damned, damned with an awful emphasis which common sinners cannot  
know. I pray God that these truths may make us watchful, make us careful lest we be found hypocrites or self-deceived professors.  
III. I turn to a much more pleasing duty, which is TO TAKE UP THE   
SAVIORS DESCRIPTION OF TRUE CONVERSION. When a stronger than   
he shall come upon him and overcome him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted and divides his spoils. Now, observe here is a   
stronger than he. This is not the man, himself. The man is the house  
the man is not so strong as the devilwho is this? This is Jesus Christ   
who comes by His Spirit into the heart of man! The Spirit of God is vastly   
superior to Satanic power, as much as the infinite Creator Himself must  
ever be superior to the finite creature.   
He who made Satan knows how to lay at him with His sword so as to  
cut Rahab and wound the dragon. It is not, you see, the result of the   
mans free willit is not the result of the devils free will, either. It is the   
result of a stronger than he coming into the soul. As soon as the stronger  
than he comes in there is a conflict. He comes upon him, that is to say,  
He attacks him!   
And ah, how vehemently does Christ lay to at the great enemy of souls!  
One sword-cut cuts away the plume of pride! Another blow takes away the  
comfort of sin a and another destroys the reigning power of sin. What a struggle there often is when man is worked upon by the Holy Spirit! With all the power of prayer, with all the might of faith the poor soul struggles against Satan! Christ struggles with all the power of His blood and the blessings of His Spirit and yet we know in some cases the arch fiend has been allowed to hold out for days, for weeks, even for months because of the unbelief of the poor soul. He could not do many mighty works there,   
it is written, because of their unbelief.   
This fight will sometimes grow so hot that the soul will choose strangling rather than life and yet the result of it is never doubtful! For notice   
in the text that the stronger than he overcomes at the last. Oh, well do I   
remember when the stronger than Satan overcame in my soul! Five years,   
more or less, was there a conflict. Sometimes my proud heart would not  
yield to Sovereign Grace. At another time a willful spirit would go astray  
after vanity. But at last, when Jesus showed His wounds and said to me,  
Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth, I could hold  
out no longer and the evil spirit could resist no more!   
The wounds of Christ had wounded the old dragon and the death of the   
Savior became the death of sin. Oh, there are many of us who know what   
it is to be conquered, to be subdued by a power other than our own! And   
in every case there must be this experience, or there is no real life. Dear   
Hearer, if your religion grew in your own garden it is a weed and good for  
nothing! If your grace springs up as the result of your own willing, your  
own acting, and your own seeking, it is good for nothing! Christ must seek   
you! It must be a power far above youmightier than you, far stronger   
than you and the devil put togetherwhich must deliver you from your  
sins.   
As soon as ever the stronger man has conquered the enemy, what does   
He do? He takes the sword of rebellion, snaps it across His knee and pulls   
the armor from the back of the unclean spirit. Prejudice, ignorance, hardheartednessall these are pulled off the old enemy. I think I see himI   
think I see the Savior stripping him to his shame and ejecting him from   
the heart with abhorrence. There, let him go among the dry places and   
again seek rest and find none. Happy day! Happy day for the palace which   
he once defiled when he is cast out and cast out forever!   
Christ Jesus then proceeds to divide the spoil. There is the mans   
heart, I will take that, says He. That shall be a jewel in My crown. The   
mans love I will set as a jewel upon My arm forever. His memory, his   
judgment, his power of thought, utterance and workingthese are all  
Mine, says Christ. He begins to divide the spoil. He puts the broad arrow   
of the King upon every room in the house, upon every piece of furniture.  
The garnishing He pulls out, I will adorn it far better than this, He says.   
There shall be no pictures of faith, but faith. There shall be no ornament   
in yonder grate except the ornament of the glowing fire of fervid zeal.   
There shall be no borrowed flowers, but I will train round this window the   
sweet roses and jasmine of love and peace of mind.   
I will wash what was only swept, with My blood. I will make it white  
and sweet and clean. And I will strike the lintel and the two side posts   
with the hyssop and with the blood markand then the destroying angel, when he sweeps by, shall sheathe his swordand the black fiend, when he would enter, shall see the mark there and go back trembling to his ac  
cursed den.   
This is conversion, the other was only conviction! This is change of  
heart, the other was only change of life. I do trust, if you have been content with the former, you will now bestir yourselves and never be satisfied   
without the latter   
*O Sovereign Grace, my heart subdue,   
I would be led in triumph, too.   
Drive the old dragon from his seat,   
With all his hellish crew.*   
Sinner, cry to the stronger than you are to come and help you. You groan  
under your slaveryI am thankful for it! Cry to the Great Deliverer! He   
will come! He will come! Is there a conflict going on in you? Remember  
faith gets the victory. Look to Jesuslook to Jesus and the battle is won!   
Cast your poor spirit upon Jesus. Now burn that broomit is of no use to  
go on sweeping! You need washingwashing with blood! Come, now,  
spare that money of yours with which you are going to buy garnishing  
they are all rubbish! Buy no more. I counsel you buy of Him gold tried in  
the fire.   
Come to His precious blood and be made really clean. Your Churchgoings, your Chapel-goings, your prayers, your almsgivings, your fasting,  
your feelings, your good works are all nothingso much dross and   
dungif you try to sweep and garnish your house with them. Cast them   
all away! Fly from your good works as you would from your bad ones! Do   
not expect to be saved by anything that you can feel that is good any more   
than you would expect to be saved by anything that you feel that is bad *None but Jesus, none but Jesus,   
Can do helpless sinners good.*   
My Lord Jesus, if You are passing by, traveling in the greatness of Your  
strength, come and show Your prowess! Turn aside, You heavenly Samson   
and rend the lion in this vineyard! If You have dipped Your robes in the   
blood of Your foes, come dye them all again with the blood of my cruel  
sins! If You have trod the wine press of Jehovahs wrath and crushed Your  
enemies, here is another of the accursed crew! Come and drag him out   
and crush him! Here is an Agag in my heart, come and hew him in pieces!  
Here is a dragon in my spirit, break, O break, his head and set me free  
from my old state of sin! Deliver me from my fierce enemy and unto You   
shall be the praise, forever and ever. Amen.

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BELIEVERS AS BLESSED AS THE BLESSED VIRGIN

NO. 1920

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 19, 1886, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And it came to pass, as He spoke those things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said to Him, Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts which nursed You. But He said, More than that,   
blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it! Luke 11:27, 28.**

You do not wonder that this enthusiastic woman lifted up her voice in admiration of our Lord. I sometimes wonder when the Gospel is preachedwhose message is so sweet, so charming, so enchantingthat we do not more often observe earnest persons breaking the cold rules of propriety and uttering exclamations of delight. Few are the hosannas of the multitude today. Is the blood of the world growing colder as the ages tell upon it? Perhaps our western constitution is too cool and selfcontained to allow us to copy the demonstrative manners of the East. Assuredly this woman is not to be blamed, but to be commended for pouring out her hearts love in honor of the Lord! The wonder is not that she spoke as she did, but that men who hear the teaching of Jesus do not more often speak in His praise! Of our blessed Lord, His enemies said, Never man spoke like this Man. His very tone was melody and His language was the Truth of God set to music! The doctrines which He taught were more than goldenthey were light to the head and joy to the heart. He revealed the inmost heart of God and taught as never Prophet or sage had taught before. Oh, certain woman of the company, though we do not know your name and cannot guess at your history, we are in harmony with your outburst of affection! We thank you for giving utterance to that feeling of delight and admiration with which we are filled. We also cry unto the Lord with youBlessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts which nursed You.

This earnest woman did not mean, in the first place, to praise Christs mother. I do not know that she had even seen Mary, or that she would have entered into her mind, apart from her matchless Son. It is often the way in the Eastif they want to insult a man, they speak vilely of his mother and, on the other handif they wish to honor him, they laud his mother to the skies! Yet they may have neither dislike nor esteem for the motherthey only reach the son through her. It was while Jesus was preaching that this cry was raisedIt came to pass, as He spoke these things. It was because He spoke so well that this woman could not withhold her words of praise. After her fashion as a woman and, as an Eastern woman, she praised the Lord Jesus by extolling His mother.

But lest such an expression, commendable enough in itself, should in later years lend any kind of countenance to that Mariolatry which our Savior foresaw, Jesus said, Yes, she is doubtless blessed, but still more blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it! Our Divine Savior, with all the love of His Manhood towards His mother, acted towards her in such a way as forever to forbid any degree of religious worship being rendered to her. He gave no countenance to the superstitious titles of, Our Lady, Mother of God, and so forth, but, on the contrary, He taught that the nearest fleshly relationship to Himself was as nothing compared with spiritual union to Him. Remember how it is writtenThen one said to Him, Behold, your mother and your brethren stand outside, desiring to speak with you. But He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is My mother? And who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand towards His disciples and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whoever shall do the will of My Father which is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.

Worship is due only to the Lord and, if rendered to the most blessed among women, it is idolatrous! This superstition robs God of His Glory and ensnares the souls of men! I come back to what I said beforethe womans speech, though it needed to be guarded against erroneous use, was a true speech and a holy speech.

Moreover, to do this woman further justice, it was a brave speech for her to make, for the Savior had been confronted by the Pharisees and scribes, those teachers of the period, those persons of authority. They had spoken ill words of Himthey had even dared to say that He cast out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of devils! When He had answered them discreetly, this woman did, as it were, proclaim His victory. She lifted up her voice, so shrill, so loud, so passionate in its eagerness that it seemed to cut through all other sounds and reached the ears of the Preacher, the ears of all the multitude and, of course, the ears of the proud revengeful priests! She cared notshe felt that she must declare her feelings and she did so right boldly. Oh, if there is a time when not only enthusiasm suggests, but when affection compels us to speak for Christ, it is when others are opposing His name and cause! If they dare to say evil things against our glorious Lord, let us lift our voices, feeble though they are, and bless His sacred name! Though we may, as a rule, be silent and shun all public observation, yet when occasion requires, let us be loud and vehement in the defense of His righteous cause!

A certain woman of the company lifted up her voice. Let us determine to be heard on our Lords behalf, for surely if we should hold our speech, the very stones would cry out! Do they curse Him? He is blessed, yes, and He shall be blessed! Do they dare to deny the eternal Truth of God which He proclaimed? He is the same yesterday, today and foreverlet Him be forever blessed. We cannot be silent when He is decried. We must and will declare, in the teeth of His adversaries, that, He has done all things well. O woman, your courage deserves our praise and our imitation! We will go to school to you to learn your bravery. Oh that we had a fire in our hearts burning as it did in yoursthen would it consume the bonds which hold our stammering tongues! Let us believe that when the current of thought around us runs in a wrong direction, such is the power of enthusiasm that one earnest, impassioned voice may turn it and our Lord may yet win Glory where now He is despised!

Our Lord, when He was thus interrupted by this womans hearty testimony, did not reprove her speech, but He improved it. Thus possibly He did gently rebuke her, but it was done so delicately that I scarcely dare concede that it was a rebuke at all. Our Lord averted the wrong interpretation which might be put upon it and then made an addition to it, but He did not at all deny that she had spoken the truth, for He said, Yes, before He added, rather, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it! He did as good as say, What you have said is certain, but yet there is a higher truthshe was blessed who bore Mebut more surely blessed, still, are those who hear the Word of God and keep it! Notice the humility which hides in this language. He says not, Blessed are those who hear My Word and keep it, though that would have been quite true. At the moment, our Lord was being praised and He, therefore, shrank out of sight. As the fining pot for silver and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise. Many a man is taken off his balance when he is loudly extolled, but not so our humble Saviorthen it was that He peculiarly shone forth as meek and lowly in heart. The Word which He had preached He speaks of as His Fathers Word and thus casts a veil over that very beauty which had caused the womans rapture.

This morning I shall invite your attention, first, for a little time, to a blessedness which is not to be deniedblessed was that holy woman who bore the Savior. Secondly, in the text there is mention made of a blessedness which is to be preferred. When we have spoken upon this theme, we shall have something to say of that blessedness as one which is now to be enjoyed. My prayer shall beand I hope yours will be the samethat we may enjoy that blessedness this very morning and throughout all the rest of our lives. I see the Redeemers outstretched hands as He pronounces this benediction upon you at this hourBlessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it! Divine Beatitude, be you fulfilled in each of us!

I. First, then, here is A BLESSEDNESS NOT TO BE DENIED. The Virgin Mother was blessed among women. I have sometimes thought that in our great eagerness to keep clear of anything like superstitious reverence of Mary, we have scarcely given to her, her due. We cannot blame the Reformers that when they forbid her spoken of as the, Queen of Heaven, and worshipped with Ave Marias and so forth, they recoiled from such idolatry. Every enlightened mind ought to revolt from such superstition! You shall have no other gods before Me is a precept which puts only God into the place of worship and forbids us to worship any other person or thing. To God alone be worship! Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord. But when we have borne this protest, it does not follow that Mary, herself, suffers in our esteemon the contrary, we revere the memory of this saintly woman! The angel made no mistake when he said, Hail, you that are highly favored: blessed are you among women. Nor was she in error when she said, From this day on all generations shall call me blessed. We call her blessed most heartily, for so she was!

The blessing which she received had been the desire of ages . The promise given at the Garden of Edenthe Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpents headhad awakened the desires of all the godly women of Israel. They longed to behold this promised One, the great Messiah, the restorer of the raceand they desired children in the hope that among those children might appear the promised Seed. It is probable that mother Eve, herself, thought that her first-born was the promised Deliverer, for, according to some readings, she said, I have gotten a man, the Lord. Though she was greatly mistaken, yet still it showed her faith and her hope. All the families of Israel watched for the appearing of the Desire of all nations, the Glory of His people.

When at last the Gift was bestowed upon the humble virgin of Nazareth, who was of the house of David, it came as a great favor. Since angels rejoiced over that birth; since shepherds hastened to do homage at the manger and since wise men from the further East came with their gold, frankincense and myrrh to adore the new-born King, Mary cannot be thought of as being less than the most blessed among women. All the circumstances of the annunciation and all the homage paid to the Infant Savior show that her visitation from on high had made her greatly blessed. The angel, when he addressed her, said, Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women. We cannot suppose that since, in Gods eyes and in the eyes of His angelic messenger this was a great favor, we are to treat it as a light thing. The Saviors, yes, was emphatic when the woman spoke of His mother as highly blessed.

She, herself, received this honor as a great blessing . She bowed herself humbly and said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to Your Word. She believed the Word of the Lordher spirit rejoiced in God, her Savior. She treasured up all the holy Words in her heart. It was no vain thing to her to have charge of the Infancy of our Lord. She felt it to be great blessedness to be placed in such a relation to the Holy Child Jesus. We can scarcely imagine the holy ecstasy, or the profound joy which filled her spirit. She was an eminently gracious woman and, therefore, she never boasted of her relationship, nor misused it for her own purpose. But what a pleasure it must have been to have nursed Jesus in His Childhood; to have cared for Him in His Youth! She treasured up His little speeches and pondered in her heart what they could all mean.

Happy were her fingers that made His garments and that tended to His infant and boyish needs. In His adult life she must have been among those who heard Him with delight. Was she not one of the most charmed of His hearers? What joy that her Son should speak in that way and bring such a salvation to the sons of men! Awe mingled with the mothers delight, deepening it, but not forbidding it. When He had risen from the dead, I think her heart must have been filled with a holy exultation, that He whom she had mourned, now lived again! When she knew that He was ascended, though it left a blank in her heart, yet she rose above the sorrow natural to her motherhood and learned, though she had known Him after the flesh, now after the flesh to know Him no more. She could not but rejoice in all the Glory with which the Man who was born of her was now surrounded!

She was, she must have been, blessed among women and this woman who spoke of her as such made no mistake. For think, my dear Friends, what blessings have come to all the world through the Virgins wondrous Child. In Him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed! If all generations call Mary, blessed, it is only because she brought into the world One who is a blessing to us all! Have you not tasted of the blessedness which is scattered by both the hands of Jesus? Do you not know that life and healing stream from His garments? If you have not enjoyed the blessedness which He bestows, it is because you have denied it to yourselves cruelly denied it to yourselves! His blessedness is free to you if your hearts desire it. Oh, what a Christ is He! His Words unlock prison doors! The glance of His eyes is the light of men! The tread of His feet turns deserts into Gardens of Eden. Our faith is in His First Adventour hope is in His Second Advent. In Him we live and if in Him we sleep, we shall in Him awake from the dead to live forever in His Glory. He has made us kings and priests unto God and we shall reign with Him forever and ever! And it was, it must have been, a great blessedness to Marys heart to think that, that Holy Thing which was born of her was the channel of such blessedness to all mankind!

I must, however, remind you that whatever the blessedness which this holy woman derived from being the mother of our Saviors humanity, she needed it all, for she was called to a great fight of affliction because of it. Usually all special blessings involve special trials. The thorn in the flesh attends the abundance of Revelations. Weight of Glory is balanced with a weight of tribulation. Lest the favored one should be exalted above measure, there is given a measure of down-casting with the lifting up. When you ask to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His baptism, you know not what you are askingfor in that cup there is bitterness as well as sweetnessand His baptism is a baptism of suffering as well as a baptism of honor!

Mary had her supreme sorrows. At the very first this woman, so pure and holy, had to bear the darkest suspicion. She could hardly confront her espoused onehe could hardly be expected to believe her extraordinary story. Faith, alone, helped her to see the bright light which lined the cloud. The Lord delivered her! Her trials in escaping from Herod by flight into Egypt were not small. Oh what sorrow often hovered over her when she saw how her Son was despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief! Once, at least, her faith well-nigh failed her, as I read it, and she trembled for Him, for we find that His mother and His brethren (and of this I will speak another day), somewhere about this very time, stood outside, desiring to speak with Him. Mark tells us that His friends sought to lay hands on Him, for they said, He is beside Himself.

He dared such perilHe so boldly opposed established authoritiesHe spoke such mysterious Truths and He was altogether so unearthly that His relatives began to think that His mind had failed Him! And it would seem that His mother was almost agreed with them! Her heart must have sunk very low with all her blessedness when she could not understand her Son and could not save Him from reproach and ill will. In fact, she never had fully understood Himdid He not, Himself, say to her in His early days, Know you notdo you not understandthat I must be about My Fathers business? She could not comprehend Him and could not protect Himand, therefore, she must have been often sorrowful.

When Jesus came to die, of all that wept for Him, surely none could have been more full of lamentations than the sorrowful mother. Mater dolorosa. Do you not see her fainting at the foot of the Cross? Then was fulfilled the text, Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul, also. John, with gentle tenderness, took her to his own home, in obedience to those Words of the dying Lord, Son, behold your mother, and, Woman, behold your son. But never a more sorrowful woman was ever housed under Heaven than she who was highly favored. She needed to have the blessedness abundantly ministered to her to sustain her heart and mind. She might have well said, Call me not Mary, but call me Marah, so bitter was her grief.

Call her Blessed among women, but do not sigh because this unattainable blessedness is not yours. Her tribulations abounded in full proportion to her joys. Only one, from the necessity of the case, could partake of such peculiar blessedness. This gate of honor is shut to all but that virgin of Davids lineage. With full and honest emphasis we pronounce her blessed this daybut no trace of envy rests in our heart. We hear the enthusiastic voice which said, Blessed is the womb that bore You and the paps which You have sucked, but it is overpowered by the Divine utteranceYes rather, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it! We do not take away the first, but we establish the second!

II. That brings us to our second headto hear the Word of God and keep it is A BLESSING PREFERABLE to having been the mother of our Lord.

We are sure of this because, in the weighing of the blessings, the blessed Master of Beatitudes holds the balances. Jesus Himself adjusts the scales of blessedness. He who began His ministry with the word, Blessed, so often repeated, knows best which blessing is the best. We accept without a question and even without am argument this statement of our Lord and we firmly believe, upon His authority, that though Mary is greatly blessed, yet even more emphatically are those blessed who hear the Word of God and keep it! We yield our ready assent to what Jesus says, for His Word is Truth.

Happily this preference so truly given by the Master puts the highest blessedness within the reach of all of us who are here this morning. We are, at this moment, in a position to hear the Word of God and keep it! If Grace is given, there are only these two steps to blessedness. I feel most happy to be addressing a congregation to whom I may say that the highest blessedness conceivable is to be attained by all who hear the Word of God, for if they further receive and keep that Word they are already blessed and the lips of the Lord Jesus have declared them to be so! Remember that this made up the soul of Marys blessedness, for she was more blessed as a Believer than as the mother of Jesus. Elizabeth said to her, Blessed is she that believes. So, dear Friend, Marys blessedness lay mainly in the fact that she believed and, therefore, quietly acquiesced in the Divine will. She was blessed because her faith enabled her to rejoice in God her Savior! It was not an easy thing to believe that He, whom she nursed in her arms and nourished from her breast, was also the Son of the Highest. He must have seemed to her more truly an Infant than, perhaps, He may ever appear to us. Nevertheless she worshipped Him as in union with the Infinite One and magnified the name of the Lord. Oh yes, it was her faith that made her blessed and the same faith may be in us!

When the Savior uttered this text, He meant to say to the woman who had pronounced His mother blessedYou, too, are blessed if you hear the Word of God and keep it! You, good woman, have said, Blessed is My mother; but to you I reply, No, blessed are you, also, if, hearing the Word that has been spoken to you this day, you place it in your heart and keep it in your soul as a hidden treasure. This blessing is open to all of us who, by Divine Grace, hear the Gospel with our hearts. Dear Friends, let me congratulate you on your position. Blessed are your ears, for they hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Blessed are you that you may sing today, Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Blessed are you if you lay up the witness of God in your hearts, remembering it, treasuring it and living upon it! You are truly favored if the Word of God dwells in you richly. Christ in you, the Hope of Glory, is your hearts delight!

I now ask you to notice that this preferable blessing is found in a very simple manner. Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it! The process is stripped of all ambiguity or mysterythere is nothing about it that is hard or difficultHear the Word of God and keep itthat is all.

By the Grace of God the most uneducated, the most sinful, the most despairing may still hear the Word of God and keep it! Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Godand by faith comes salvation. To hear Gods Word is the privilege of the poor. Yes, of all to whom the Word is spoken. As it is written, He that has ears to hear, let him hear. Beloved, if you would attain to blessedness, hear Gods Word as Gods Word. Receive it, not as the word of man, for in that way it cannot bless you. But accept it as being the Word of God to your own souls. Hear it, therefore, with a reverent credence which does not quibble at it, nor question it, but which sweetly yields to it. You shall be blessed if you hear it as the Word of God ought to be heard. Be silent while God speaks! Let judgment, imagination and desire all bow before Jehovahs voice!

Let the Word of God fully operate upon you, while your soul sits meekly at Jesus feet. Be receptive. Receive the Truth of God with no wish but to understand it and retain it. Hear it with your understanding. Endeavor to know what it means, that you may be nourished by it. Do not let it come in one ear and go out the other, otherwise it may leave condemnation behind it. But hear it as a man would hear who was listening to a father whom he loved and reverenced. Listen as a man listens who is eagerly catching at newsnews which concerns himself and his highest interests. Hear, in fact, as though God spoke! Israel stood trembling at the foot of Sinai because the Lord spoke in tones of thunderyou should hear with the same reverence, though not with the same alarm. As much reverence is due to Gods Word out of His Inspired Book as to that same Word thundered out of the thick darkness and the flames of fire! God, in these last days, has spoken to us by His Son, Jesus, who is the express Image of His Person and the brightness of His Glory. Hear this incomparable Word with all your powers and faculties! Let heart and mind and thought and memory and reason attend to that which the Lord says to us! So listening, you shall live. Blessed are those who hear the Word of God.

But we must keep it, too. Now, to keep a thing you must first get it. Blessed are they that grasp at what they hear, saying, That means me. Blessed are they who take home to themselves the Truths revealed, who, when they hear that Jesus died, say, He loved me and gave Himself for me. Hug the Truth of God to your souls! Grapple it to your hearts with hooks of steel! When you have laid hold upon it, keep it against all comers. Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his lifeand let the Word of God be life to you. Hold the Word of God as more dear than this mortal life and sooner part with all things upon earth than yield a syllable of this priceless Word! So hold it as to remember it, to meditate upon it, to feed upon it.

So hold it as to assimilate itas when a man gets bread into himself and it builds up his frame, becoming one with himself, so that there is no getting him away from it, nor it from him. Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Word of God! Hold it, also, by obeying it. Yield yourself up to its swayobey the precept, catch its spirit, follow out the will of God. If we thus hear and keep the Word of God, our Master declares that however blessed may be the virgin of whom He was born, still more are we blessed because we are hearing the Word of God and keeping it! I again cannot help saying, happy are the lips that have to speak this morning and to tell you of a blessing not shut up to a few, nor long ago spent upon one favored person, but open to all such as joyfully hear and willingly retain the Word of God!

But why is this blessing so very remarkable? It is, my dear Friends, because it is spiritual. Everything that is of the flesh must die. All relationships to Christ that were carnal passed away. Those who had known Him after the flesh, before long, after the flesh knew Him no more. When He had risen from the dead, He said to the holy woman, Touch Me not. He was not, now, to be known in an outward fashion. Today no one is rated high in the Kingdom of God because, like James, he was, the Lords brother, or like the Apostles, the Lords attendants, or like Mary, the Lords mother. In the spiritual Kingdom, relationship is not of blood or of birth. All external distinctions of place, race and descent are abolished. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. The Father seeks such to worship Him and such He finds nothing else is precious in His sight. To hear the Word of God aright is a spiritual act. To keep that Word is a spiritual operation, affecting the heart, the conscience and the whole man and, therefore, it is lasting, yes, everlasting, and for this reason it stands high above everything else in the estimation of the Savior as a ground of blessedness.

Now listen to me for a moment while I set forth the excellence of this blessedness. If those who hear Gods Word and keep it are more blessed than even was Mary who was the mother of our Lord, then any other form of blessedness must be very secondary to the hearing of the Word of God and keeping it! For instance, do you happen to be rich? Say not that the rich are blessedblessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it! Are you endowed with talent? Do not wrap yourselves up in conceit! Do not say, Blessed are we because we have great gifts. Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it! Are you a person held in high esteem and justly beloved? Yet do not make an idol of mans regard, for, Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it! Have you attained to considerable influence? Then thank God for it and use it rightly, but remember that this is not blessednessbut, Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it! Are you enjoying good health? That is one of the greatest of earthly blessingswhatever else you miss, you certainly have a great favor in being free from pain and diseasebut health is not blessedness. Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it! If you were on a sickbed in the most poverty stricken attic in this city and if you had no gifts and had even lost your sight, yet if inwardly you heard the Word of God and kept it, you would be blessed amid all your poverty!

I am going a step furtherif any of you possess high religious privileges, do not pride yourselves on them as though these, alone, were blessedness. Equally blessed are any who hear Gods Word and keep it! Somebody might have said the Apostles were blessed, for they cast out devils and healed the sick. Did they not go back to the Master and say, even the devils are subject unto us through Your name? Yes, Jesus said, notwithstanding in this rejoice not; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven. Perhaps you will say, Blessed is the man who can preach to a multitude. Blessed is the man who can lead thousands to Christ. It is so, but yet, Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it! Blessed is the Sunday school teacher who sees her children saved. Yes, the successful worker is blessed, but even more certainly is he blessed who hears and keeps the sacred Word of God! This blessing rises above all others and shines with a more heavenly radiance! Again I add, what a mercy that it is within our reach!   
This should warn you against priding yourselves upon your relationship to good or great men. Do not say, My father was a minister. Or, My mother is a saint in Heaven. Yes, there is an honor about such a pedigree, but true blessedness comes not in that way or else Ishmael, Esau and Absalom had been blessed. Not he that is born after the flesh, but he that is according to promise, is truly blessed. There is no form of blessedness which exceeds this of hearing the Word of God and keeping it. This seems a commonplace business, but it is not common in the sight of God. This which appertains to the whole family of Hearers and Believers is, after all, the gem of the casket, the Kohinoor among the jewels! Since to hear the Word of God and keep it is a higher blessing than to bring forth the Babe of Bethlehem, it is superior to all other imaginable blessings which can be found beneath the skies!

III. So now we close by considering this as A BLESSEDNESS TO BE AT ONCE ENJOYED. I breathe to Heaven this earnest prayer that we may now enter into this blessedness. Let us see if we cannot sit still in our seats, for a while, and drink in this wine on the lees well refined.

This blessedness belongs to the present . Blessed are they that are hearing the Word of God and keeping it! It is not a remote, but an immediate blessedness. While you are hearing and keeping Gods Word, you are then blessed. The blessedness is for this world and for you. But I am so cast down. Yes, but you are blessed! Alas! I bear such a burden of afflictions. Yes, but you are blessed! Alas! I have not known a good time of late. No, but you are blessed! Your blessedness does not depend upon your fancies and feelings. If you hear the Word of God and keep it, you are, at this moment, blessed. But says one, If an angel appeared to me and said, Blessed are you among women, I would be very happy. Behold, the angels Lord and King appears to you this morning in this blessed Book and speaks out of it with living loving tones, saying, Blessed are those who hear the Word of God, and keep it! You are blessed! Does not that assurance make you happy? It ought to. It ought to fill you with a calm, serene delight. Jesus says I am blessed and though, just for the moment, sense does not confirm the declaration, yet faith believes it! Blessed is she that believes: for there shall be a performance of the things that are spoken. Faith finds a present blessedness in the Word of God which she hears and keeps.

That blessedness lies, in a great measure, in the very act of hearing and keeping Gods Word. I can speak experimentally in this instance. I bear my witness that whenever God speaks to me, I feel, in listening to His voice, a blessedness. The act of bowing the mind to receive communications from God is most pleasurable and the actual sense of those communications is supremely so. When I sit down with my opened Bible and let the Divine Truth enter my mind and permeate my thoughts and my affections, I would not change places with the angel Gabriel! To hear the voice of God as Truth spoken home to my heart by the Holy Spirit is better music to my soul than could be yielded by harps of angels or songs of shining ones! I hope that sometimes in this House of Prayer, when the Gospel has been preached and God has spoken through me, you have felt an exceeding joy in hearing His Word. You have felt Oh, that these services could last forever! and you have sighed for the place

*Where congregations never break up,   
And Sabbaths have no end.*

Hearing the Word of God is, in itself, an intense delight. I do not mean the bare hearing of sermons, nor the reading of good books, nor even the reading of the Bible in the letterbut when the inner ear is really affected by Gods own Word, oh, then we know life and light and Heaven! The primeval darkness passed away when God sent forth His Word. He said, Light be, and light was. The entrance of His Word gives light. All other lights seem dim candles compared with this Divine sun. If the Lords Word has ever said, Peace be unto you, then the Lord has breathed His own calm into your heart and you have felt that you are truly blessed.

This blessedness lies also in the retaining of Gods Word in the soul, in the laying it up and storing it and especially in the obeying of it. When I feel I am doing Gods will, I am supremely happy. Active obedience is present enjoyment to the spiritual mindin keeping His Commandments there is great reward. Whenever you have a question about a course of conduct, you are unhappy in it. But when you feel, This which I am about to do is according to Gods mind, I have Scriptural warrant for it and I am called to itwhy then, you are perfectly at ease! If everybody were to quibble, you would not mind and if you, yourself, suffered in consequence of doing it, you would take joyfully the spoiling of your goods. Assured obedience to the Word of God is the most sure road to a present happiness.

When a man has once broken the shell of carnality and has burst forth into the new world where God can be heard, he has entered the Kingdom of Heaven! God cannot be heard in this carnal nature of ours, which is like the adder which cannot be charmed. While we are ruled by the flesh, we are in a silent land as to God. But when we break loose of the flesh and enter into the new world of spiritual life and peace, then we are conscious that God has communications with us, for that is what is meant by His Word, and this fact blesses us. When the Lord manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the worldthis is Heaven! Whether we are in the body or out of it, the reception of communications from God to our hearts and the storing up of those communications is a blessedness which excels all that Mary could have known merely as being, after the flesh, the mother of Jesus! Beloved, I do not need to expatiate here, for this is a matter for experimental test rather than for verbal description. Blessed are they, yes, infinitely blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it! The hearing of it and the keeping of the Word are, in themselves, blessedness!

This blessing is not dependent upon outward circumstances . If you hear Gods Word and keep it, you may be very ill and, yet, in spirit you will be well. You may be very feeble and, yet, in spirit you will be strong. You may be dying and, yet, you shall not die, for he that hears the Word of God shall never see death. In listening to the Lord, you have reached a region from which you look down upon the dust and smoke of time and sense! The things which are visible are transient dreams which have small power over you, now that the word of the Lord has brought you out of the grave of the visible into the living world of the invisible! We walk by faith, not by sight, and though, now, we see not our God, yet in our hearts we hear him and this hearing fills us with joy unspeakable and full of joy! It is a matter of experience and, therefore, though I should speak 10,000 words, I could not set it forth. I exhort you to try it for yourselves.

Behold, my Hearer, there lies at your feet the most precious jewel that ever sparkled before a monarchs eyes! Neither earth nor Heaven can produce its superior! You are a hearer, be a hearer, a real hearer! But be you not a hearer, only, but a doer of the word, for that man is blessed in his deed. The blessedness of hearing and keeping the Word of Godwill you prize it, or will you scorn it? What do you say, will you trample this pearl under your feet? I pray you, do not! Oh take this peerless, priceless blessedness! It lies so near you, do not miss it! If you are wise, you will listen to the voice of ancient prophecy which says, Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live. Every man desires happiness and here it is. Blessedness is the aspiration of us alllo, it lies before you! Wise men strive for blessedness and even fools wish for it. My Hearer, will you have it? You have not to climb to Heaven to win it, nor dive to Hell to earn it. You need not wait for ecstasies, nor stop till you have acquired great learning, or suffered severe trialsthe Word of God is near you, in your mouth and in your heart!

If with your heart you will believe on the Lord Jesus and with your mouth make confession of Him, you shall be saved! Or, to put it in the words of the text, Hear the Word of God and keep it! As soon as you have done this, while you are doing it and as long as you do it, in hearing and in keeping Gods Word, there shall come to you a double blessing. God has blessed you and you shall be blessed! Did you come in here, this morning, under a conscious curse? Come, then, hear the Word of the Lord and the curse is turned into a blessing! Has the blessing of former days seemed to fade of late? Then, again, hear and keep the good Word of God! All other doctrine will cause your blessedness to dwindle.

If you are faint and weary, plunge into the Word of God as a man does into a bath when he desires to be refreshed. You shall rise out of the waves of the Truths of God revived, refreshed, happy, blessed! O my Hearers, the blessedness of my own soul lies, at this moment, in listening to the Word of the living God! How I wish you all knew this sweetness! Then shall you young women be blessed virgins and you mothers, blessed matrons and all of us blessed men and blessed women. You are the seed of the blessed of the Lord and your offspring with you. God says, Surely blessing I will bless you. May you never lose a sense of that blessing! Amen.

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THE TRUE LINEAGE   
NO. 3018

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13 1906.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, IN THE YEAR 1864.

**And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You. But He said, More than that, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it. Luke 11:27, 28.**

Was this a loving-hearted woman who had been moved by the dear Saviors discourse? Many, doubtless, had listened to the same gracious wordssome of them with wrath and others with stern complacency but it may be that her soul began to swell with holy wonder at the marvelous things which proceeded out of His mouth and her soul felt such an affection for the Man from whom so much of Grace proceeded that she cried, Blessed is the womb that bore You! Was it so? Perhaps it was an ignorant but passionate love breaking through all restraint. Sometimes, among our Primitive Methodist friends, we hear the same kind of thingthey get so carried away by the power of the Truth of God which has just been stated that they cannot refrain from crying out, Glory! or, Hallelujah! Throughout all Wales, this custom, which I am far from condemning, prevails through the whole sermon, often very much to the comfort of the speaker, enlivening him and cheering him onand making him rise to greater flights than otherwise he might have taken. Perhaps we may look at this interruption of the affectionate woman in that light.

Possibly, however, there was bold, blank ignorance rather than intense affection. Hers may have been a sort of vacant wonder at what she had heard and, involuntarily, she betrayed it with her tongue. So have I noticed, sometimes, when I have been preaching the Word among our Primitive Methodist friends that they have not always put the Glory! in at the right place, or the observation with which they have favored us has been as inappropriate as it well could be! Though I have been glad, at times, to hear some emotional response when it seemed to come from true sensibility and was compatible with common sense, I have not been quite so gratified when ignorance has been the prompter. Perhaps it was so with this woman. Such, at least, is the opinion of many sound expositorsand Jesus does not appear to commend her at all. She was a poor ignorant soul who, perhaps, had never listened to any preaching beforeand certainly had never listened to such preaching as that of Jesus Christand so she cried out, in a sort of stupid wonder, Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You.

Anyhow, whichever it might be, this woman was but a specimen of very many in her own age and a representative of many millions in successive ages. She turned her admiration, you perceive, from the Person of Christ to the person of His mother. There was some sort of tendency of this kind on other occasions in Christs lifeand he rebuked it as He did herefor, you will observe, though He says nothing disrespectful of His mother, yet He at once puts the extinguisher upon everything like blessing her as though she were so highly favored above all other Believers in Himself. On the occasion of the marriage in Cana of Galilee, Jesus answered His motherI will not say roughlythat was not possible for Himbut somewhat sternly when He said, Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come. He purposely discouraged what He must have perceived was the natural tendency of peoples minds to reverence His mother unduly. And it does seem marvelous to any thinking man that after such words as these of my text, Mariolatry should have prevailed in the Church of Rome to so frightful an extent as it has done and as it still does! Why, for every prayer offered to Jesus Christ, I believe there are fifty, at the present moment, offered to the Virgin Mary. At all events, in the Romanists rosary, there are nine beads for the Hail Mary to every one for, Our Father.

Observe that she is to be held in profound respect, she is blessed among women. There should never come from the lips of any Christian a single word of disrespect to hershe was highly favored, she was a sort of second Eve, as Eve brought forth sin, this woman, this second Eve, brought forth the Lord who is our Salvation. She does stand in a very high position, but still, in no respect is she to be an object of worship! By no means is she to be lifted up and extolled as though she were immaculately conceived and afterwards lived without sin and was taken up, as the Papists declare, by a marvelous assumption into Heavenan assumption, indeed, on their part, and nothing better than an assumption, without any foundation whatever in fact! No, Brothers and Sisters, the Virgin Mary was a sinner, saved by Grace, as you and I are! That Savior whom she brought forth, was a Savior to her as much as to us. She had to be washed from sin, both original and contracted, in the precious blood of her own Child, the Son of the Highest. Neither could she have entered Heaven unless He had pronounced her absolution and she had been, as we are, accepted in the Beloved. Yet I do not wonder that there was a tendency to exalt her undulyhowever, I do marvel much that, after Christ has spoken so plainly and so expressly, men should have had the impudence, and the devil should have had the audacity to delude millions of professing Christians into a worship of her, who is to be reverenced, but never to be adored.

If you look at the text, you will see that there is something very beautiful about it. This woman pronounced a benediction upon the Virgin MaryChrist lifts that off and puts it on all His people. She said, Blessed is the woman who brought You forth. Yes, said Jesus, she is blessed, but (in the very same sense) they are blessed who hear the Word of God, and keep it. Thus, my Brothers and Sisters, whatever blessings pertain to Mary, pertain to you and pertain to me if we hear the Word of God and keep it! Whatever we may suppose to have been the mercies comprehended in Mary being so highly favored a person, those very same mercies are yours and mine if, hearing the Word of God, we truly keep it.

I. It is supposed by many and very naturally, that it would have been a delightful thing to have been the mother of our Lord, BECAUSE THEN WE WOULD HAVE HAD THE HONOR OF THE CLOSEST ASSOCIATION WITH HIM.

To have seen that Infant in His cradle and nursed Him upon ones knees. To have marked the ripening years of the Holy Child, to have observed His gracious words, His holy piety, His complete obedience to His parents. To have remained with Him the 30 years which, doubtless, Joseph and Mary spent with their honored, glorious Son, must have been no small blessing! The same spirit, you know, comes out in Mrs. Lukes pretty hymn, such a favorite with our dear children, which we all of us love to sing

*I think, when I read that sweet story of old, When Jesus was here among men   
How He called little children as lambs to His fold, I should like to have been with them then. I wish that His hands had been placed on my head, That His arms had been thrown around me And that I might have seen His kind look when He said, Let the little ones come unto Me.*

Yes, many a mother might feel that to be kissed with those little lips, to have had her neck surrounded by those blessed arms, to have had her eyes looked into with the love-flashing eyes of such a Child as that would have been a gift to be craved for every day! Well, so it looks, Beloved, and yet, if we come to think rightly of it, the illusion is quickly dispelled. It was a high privilege to be associated with Christ, but, unless spiritually sanctified, it was a solemn responsibility sinking the soul deeper in guilt, rather than raising it higher in sanctification! Let me venture to remind you of one who had the very closest intimacy with Christ in the days of His public ministry. He was so trusted by the Savior that he kept the little treasury in which Christ put, when there were any, the excessive gifts of charity. He was the treasurer of the little companyyou know himJudas. He had been with Jesus almost everywhere. He had been His familiar friend and acquaintance and when He dipped the bread with Him in the bowl, it was but an indication of the close association which had been preserved between the Divine Master and a vile creature who was utterly unworthy of such a privilege! There was never such another son of perdition as Judas, the friend and acquaintance of Jesus Christ. Never has any other man sunk so low in the depths of Divine Wrath, with so huge a millstone about his neck, as this man with whom Christ took such sweet counsel and went to the House of God in company! The same sun ripens the corn and the poppies. This man was ripened in guilt by the same external process that ripened others in holiness.

It is not, then, after all, so great a gift, looked at as a natural blessing. But, whatever the blessing may be, it is open to every Christian spiritually. Beloved you may have an acquaintance with Christ if you are His people! Quite as near and far more enduring than any acquaintance which His mother could have gained by merely dandling Him on her knees, or supplying His needs from her breasts! Today you may talk with Jesus, you heirs of Heaven! Your Divine Elder Brothers company is free to youyou have but to go to Him and He will bring you into His banqueting house and His banner over you shall be love. Still is His left hand under the head of His saints, and His right hand does embrace them. There are dearer things than ever the Infant Christ could give to His mother! There are kisses of His lips more sweet, more spiritual than any which Mary received. You have but to long for them and to pine after them and, when you get them, you have but to prize them and you shall have them every day! I trust, Beloved, some of us need not cry with the spouse in the Song, O that you were as my brother that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find you without, I would kiss you, for we can say, My Beloved is mine, and I am His...Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love. I say, then, that all the honor of associating with Christ may be had, at the present moment, by His people! The sweetest of fellowship can be enjoyed by us in the highest and purest sense, so that the blessing which Mary had is ours and we may say, with Christ, Yes, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.

II. Again, it is naturally supposed, by some, that it must have been a sweet thing to be the mother of our Lord BECAUSE THEN WE WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH HIM AND HAVE KNOWN MORE OF HIS HEART.

If He had any secrets, surely He would confide them to His mother! There must have oozed out, in His private life, some things which men did not see in public. Perhaps there may have been something which He could not very well unveil to the gaze of the millions which would be perceived by Joseph and by His admiring mother. She was behind the scenes. She had the benefit of looking into His very heart in a way in which we cannot do. Well, there may be something in that, but I do not think there is much. I do not know that Mary knew more than others what she did know, she did well to lay up in her heartbut she does not appear, from anything you read in the Gospels, to have been a better instructed Believer than any other of Christs disciples. And we have no indication of her having made any extraordinary advances in the spiritual instruction which her Son had given.

But certain is it that, whatever Mary may have found out, you and I may find out nownot naturally, but spiritually. Do you wonder that I should say so? Here is a text to prove itThe secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant. I remember also the Masters words where He said, Henceforth 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. No, so blessedly does this Divine Revealer of secrets tell us what is in His heart that He keeps back nothing which is profitable to usand can say to us as He said to His disciplesIf it were not so, I would have told you. Christ keeps nothing back from His chosen. Between the heart of a true saint and Christ there are no secrets! We pour our hearts into His heart and He pours back His heart into ours. Does He not, this day, manifest Himself unto us as He does not unto the world? You know that He does! And therefore you will not ignorantly cry out, as this woman did, Blessed is the womb that bore You, but you will intelligently bless God that, having heard the Word, and kept it, you have, first of all, as true a communion with the Savior as the Virgin had, and you have, in the second place, as true an acquaintance with the secrets of His heart as she can be supposed to have obtained!

III. Further, perhaps a more common remark is this, I wish that I had been Christs mother, so that I MIGHT HAVE NURSED HIM AND SUPPORTED HIS NEEDS, watched Him in His weakness, put Him to His rest and heard the first lisps when He began to speak. Oh, it would have been something to have said, when I was in Heaven, that I had nursed the One who is now exalted far above all principalities and powers, that I listened to the cry of His Infancy and relieved His needs.

Well, that would be something, but let me say to you that you may have it, Belovedevery child of God may have it! Christ is still on earth not as to His bodily Person, but as to His mystical Personand you may still nurse that mystical Person. We, ministers of God, are we not nursing fathers unto the Church of God? And you, each of you, in your sphere, as you teach the ignorant, guide the wandering and comfort those that are bowed down, are hearing the plaintive cry of a suffering Savior! And you are, with the breast of your consolation, supplying the needs of His yet infant Church. Perhaps it is better, and far nobler, to have the honor of nursing Christs mystical body than it was to care for His corporeal frame because there is a much wider range here. It was but a little cup He needed. If was but a morsel and a drop the Savior sometimes needed. But now His great body, stretched as it is from Japan to AmericaHis great body, found as it is in every part of this worldHis great body, found in yonder sick one, in yonder poverty-stricken ones, requires vastly more and, therefore, of your substance you may give more, yes, your whole strength you may offer up, that you may feed Him and supply His spiritual needs! Whatever honor, then, the Virgin had in this respect, Christs pure virgins may still have if they will wait upon His Church and minister to it of their hearts substance

*Jesus, poorest of the poor   
Man of Sorrows! Child of grief!   
Happy they whose bounteous store   
Ministered to Your relief.   
Jesus, though Your head is crowned,   
Crowned with loftiest majesty,   
In Your members You are found,   
Plunged in deepest poverty.   
They who feed Your sick and faint   
For YOURSELF a banquet find!   
They who clothe the naked saint   
Round YOUR loins the raiment bind.*

IV. It may be very possible that some others have looked at it in another way. They have said, Blessed is the womb that bore Him, and the paps that gave Him suck, for had it been our lot to be His mother, then we believe HE WOULD HAVE BEEN READY TO HEAR OUR CRY, for a son cannot surely resist the prayer of His own mother. And when a mother says, My Son, help me, I am sinful. I believe in You, help me. When she cries out to Him whom she had conceived, Help me, blot out my sins, why surely Jesus would heed, with ready ear, and say, Mother, your sins are forgiven you.

But, Beloved, this is only our fancy, for Christ is just as ready to save any sinner in this place as He was to save His mother, for it is His greatest delight to see a sinner, with tears in his eyes, crying, God be merciful to me, a sinner. If I had power to pardon you, I think you know how cheerfully I would do it. Oh, could I break your hearts and bind them up again, God knows that I would not let this night pass without doing it! And do you think that my Lord and Master is less loving than I am? You feel, if He were here tonight, and you were His mother, that He would be sure to hear your cry and answer you. But Jesus Christ said, on one occasion, as He looked upon the crowd gathered together, when someone said to Him, Your mother and Your brethren stand outside, desiring to speak with Youwhat did He say? Who is My mother? And who are My brethren? And then He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whoever shall do the will of My Father who is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother. And you, if you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall not stand second to His mother! No, shall I not say it? You shall even have the preference! Christ was preaching and they said, Here is your mother. Did He stop to attend to His mother? No, but first He would feed His disciples! First He would teach them! And so, Sinner, you shall not be second to the mother of the Savior! Do but cry to Him now! Oh, that the Holy Spirit might show you your lost state, reveal to you your need, and put a penitent cry into your mouth for, when you can cry, Jesus, pity me and save me, you may cry to Him with the greatest confidence, for

*He is able, He is willing,*

*Doubt no more!*   
You need not seek to move His heart with many cries, for His heart is moved already! He loves the sons of men. His delights are with them. You cannot do Him a greater service than by letting Him save you. Submit yourself, with all your emptiness, to the fullness of His unspeakable compassion! Is there not a thought here that might woo someI am holding it now like a loadstoneis there no metal here that will be attracted by it? The love of Christ to His people, to poor sinners who seek Him, is as great as any love He ever had to His motherand even greater! You may come with boldness to Him, though you never sought His face before!

V. Again, I think some have thought that if they had been His mother, THEY COULD HAVE COME TO HIM WITH GREATER EASE.   
It is so easy to speak to one whom we know. We are not at all afraid to tell our needs to one who has been so near to us as Christ was to His mother. Yet I would have you remember that Christ, as the Son of God, was not the Son of Mary. Christ, the Divine Savior, was no nearer to Mary than He is to us. Christ was merely the Man Christ that was conceived in her womb, or that sucked at her breasts and, therefore, in His Divine Person, He towers as much above her as He does above us! And then, though He was born of the substance of His mother, yet was He of our substance, too, for He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesha Man, such as we are. If He were an angel, being of a different kind, we might be afraid to come to Him, but He is a Man, He has a mans emotions, a mans heart, a mans compassion, a mans love and we need not be afraid to come to Him! What though He was not born of us, yet is He of us. Though we are not His mother, yet, we are His brothers and sisters. So let us come boldly to Him. Sinner, you have as much right to come as Mary had. She had none except what Divine Grace gave heryou have the same. Did Christ ever cast away one sinner who came to Him? No. Did He ever reject one that was ever brought to Him? There was a woman taken in adultery and she did not come willingly, but they brought her to Him, thinking, Surely, Christ will condemn her. What was the result? After driving all her adversaries away, He said to her, Go, and sin no more, And so will He say to you if your doubts and trembling and fears should bring you to Him. When He casts one soul away, then let other souls be afraid to come to Him, but while my blessed Master stands with open arms and takes the foulest, and vilest, and poorest to minister unto His love, I pray you stand not back through shame or fear! As much as if you were His mother and He your Child, come to Him, for He invites you to come, saying, Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. With tearful eyes He entreats you to come to Him and if you will not, He does but relieve His heart by crying, How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not!   
VI. Perhaps, if you will think this over, you will see much more that is beautiful. I am sure there is no topic more consolatory than that which my text contains. THE VERY BLESSING WHICH BELONGED TO THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF JESUS BELONGS TO EVERY SOUL THAT HEARS GODS WORD AND KEEPS IT.   
Now you hear it. Do you hear it with your inside earswith the ears of your heart? And when you hear it, do you keep it in your memory? Do you keep it in your faith? Do you try to keep it in your obedience? And are you daily testifying to its truth? If so, all these blessings are yours and let me say to any trembling, awakened, convicted sinnerall these blessings may be yours if you hear the Word of God and keep it tonight! Here are one or two words of God that I want you to keepCome now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Will you not come and reason with God and talk this matter over? You have heard the Word, I pray you to keep it, that is, to obey it. Here is another message from the Word of GodThis is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. You have heard thatkeep it! Believe that although you are a sinner, He came to save you. Rest in it, trust in it. Here is one more, and I pray you, as you hear it, keep itHe that believes and is baptized shall be saved. You have heard itnow keep it. To believe is to trust. Trust Christ now! I pray God to constrain you to do it before you pass those doors. Fall flat on your face upon Christs promise! As for your own righteousness, away with it to the dogs! No prayer, no tears, no vows, no sighs of yours can do anything in the matter! Trust Jesus Christ wholly, now! And then if you have heard that Word and shall thus keep it, go your way, and let Satan say what he will and let the flesh make what noise it pleasesChrist has blessed you and you are blessed! He has said to you, sinners as you are, Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it. When you and I get to Heaven, may we find it to be so! May we glory there and sing as loud a song as even Mary did when she said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaidenfor all generations may call that one blessed who has sought and found the Savior! O Beloved, even in Heaven, that song of Mary shall make a sweet song for us all! May we begin to sing it here and Christ shall have the praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
Luke 11:14-54.

Verses 14, 15. And He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spoke and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casts out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. One would hardly have thought that they could have gone to such a length as thatbut when men hate Christ, there is nothing they will not say against Him. It is no subject of surprise when great heresies arise, for they are the natural outcome of human enmity against Christ and His Truth. People in such a state of heart will say anything. They will give utterance to thoughts that you could not have imagined would have entered any human brainit is the enmity of the heart to Christ that produces this blasphemy of the tongue!

16. And others, tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from Heaven. You are working this work from beneath, they said, now do something that is really from above. They must have known that the casting out of the devil was from Heaven, for Satan would never cast out Satan!

17, 18. But He, knowing their thought, said unto them, Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falls. If Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Because you say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. That was a very good and sufficient answer to these cavilers. It is a comfort to us to know that any error is very vulnerablethere is always a weak point about it. In this case, Christ permitted it to turn its sting upon itself.

19. And if I, by Beelzebub, cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges. For some of these men had sons who either did really cast out devils, being disciples of Christ, or else professed to do so, being exorcists, pretending to a power they did not possess. In either case, the argument was good as against the objectors.

20-22. But if I, with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils. This is how Christ drives out the devil by sheer force of armsHe overcomes him and drives him out. He does not cajole him, invite him, or persuade him to go, but He fights with him, puts forth His Omnipotent Power against him, overthrows him, takes away his armor and divides the spoil. Were you ever conscious of such a fight as that? If not, be afraid of your so-called reformation, for there is no true reformation and no true conversion in which there is no conflict between Christ and Satan!

23, 24. He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathers not with Me scatters. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man. This is the kind of conversion which is not genuinewhen the unclean spirit is gone out of a mangone out on his own accordand he may do that. He may leave a man, for a while, with the evil purpose of getting him more completely into his power afterwards. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man.

24. He walks through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, I will return unto my house from where I came out. It was his house all the while! He left it voluntarilyhe was not driven out by forcehe simply left it for a time in order that he might return to it and retain it the more completely. Now he goes back to it.

25. And when he comes, he finds it swept and garnished. There has been a reformation of a sortthe man has given up drunkenness, left off swearing and become, in certain respects, a better man. The house is swept and garnished, but there is no new tenant of Mansoulthere is no Christ come to take possession of Heart Castle.

26. Then he goes, and takes to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. It often happens that when men make a profession of reformation and then relapse into their former state, they become far worse than they were before. The so-called reformation is all of their own doingor rather, the greater part of it is the devils doing. The demon within the man voluntarily went away and now that he is back, he brings with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. And so the man is more than eight times worse than he was before the demon left him for a while!

27, 28. And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You. But He said, more than that, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it. The enthusiastic woman was so carried away with admiration for Christ that she thought His mother was a highly-favored woman and she called her, blessed. Yes, said Christ, she is blessed, but still more blessed are they who have the Word of God in their hearts, who regard it as their own, and keep it as a great prize.

29. And when the people were gathered thick together, He began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign. Look back to the 16th verseOthers, tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from Heaven. Christ had answered those who imputed His miraculous works to Satanic agencynow He answers these others.

29, 30 . And there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonah the Prophet. For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation. Jonah rose, as it were, from the dead, for he was buried in the deep, in the belly of the whale! And Christ was buried in Josephs tomb, yet He came back from the grave on the third day.

31, 32. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost part of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here. The Resurrection would make Christ the most conspicuous sign of Gods Presence among the people! It would be the testimony of God to His Son that He was, indeed, the Messiah.

33-35. No man, when he has lighted a candle, puts it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they that come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light, but when your eye is bad, your body is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in you is not darkness. If your religion is irreligion, if your hope is a false one, if your highest aspirations are untrue, what is your position in the sight of God? Where are you?

36, 37. May your whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle does give you light. And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee besought Him to dine with him: and He went in, and sat down to meat. It was often a matter of marvel to the onlookers that Christ went among publicans and sinnersbut is it not a greater wonder that He went among Pharisees? If they asked Him to their houses, it was usually because they hoped to entangle Him in His talk, yet the condescension of our Master is so great that again and again, He went in, and sat down to meat.

38. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that He had not just washed before dinner. Not because Christs hands needed washing, but because it was the custom of the Pharisees to wash before eating, and our Lord broke through the customs as He was known to do, for He cared nothing for their inventions!

39, 40. And the Lord said unto Him, Now do you Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. You fool, did not He who made the outside make the inside, also? One needs washing as much as the other. You are so careful of your handswill you not be more careful of your hearts?

41. But rather give alms of such things as you have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you. When you are full of love to your fellow men, and make a practice of helping them, you have cleansed your heart from selfishness and have really washed yourself.

42. But woe unto you, Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God; these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone. How many, in these days, are very particular about very little things, but very careless about great things? They would not violate the law of their sect or party for the world, but the Law of God is of small account to them.

43. Woe unto you, Pharisees! For you love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. They loved to be called Rabbi, Learned Doctors of the Law. Any title that made them appear great was very sweet to them.

44. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them. Nobody but Christ knew how base they were. They were fair to look upon, but He knew that they were villainously hypocritical and He, therefore, denounced them. Ah, dear Friends, the great matter is to have Grace in the heartto have the Divine Light within in the soulbut if we have not this, vain is a fair profession, vain is everything that comes from man! If we are to be saved, we must have the Grace that comes from God alone.

45. Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto Him, Master, thus saying you reproach us also. There was no great difference between the scribes and Pharisees and the lawyers, as this man evidently perceived, and as our Lord also soon confirmed by pronouncing upon them the same kind of, Woe, that He had pronounced upon the other false teachers!

46. And He said, Woe unto you also, you lawyers! For you load men with burdens grievous to be borne, and you yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. Their regulations as to moral and ceremonial observances were like huge bundles of firewood or crushing burdens bound together and made into a weight intolerable for any man to carry! Many of these rules, by themselves, were grievous enoughbut all together they formed a yoke that neither the people nor their fathers could bear. The scribes, Pharisees and lawyers piled the great load upon thembut none helped them to sustain it, nor offered to relieve them of any portion of it. You load men with burdens grievous to be borne, and you yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

47, 48. Woe unto you! For you build the sepulchers of the Prophets and your fathers killed them. Truly you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and you build their sepulchers. They pretended to have such regard for the holy men of the past that, being unable to honor them in person, they would set up monuments to their memory and adorn their resting places with tokens of respect.

Out of their own mouths our Lord condemned these hypocrites Truly you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers. In effect, Jesus said to them, You confess that you are the sons of the murderers of the Prophets. That admission carries with it far more than you imagine. You are their sons, not only by birth, but also by resemblanceyou are veritable children of those who killed the Prophets. If you had lived in their day, you would have committed the crimes you pretend to condemn.

49-51. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them Prophets and Apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute, that the blood of all the Prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation. From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zachariah, which perished between the altar and the Temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation. The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than anything that the world has ever witnessed, either before or since. Even Titus seemed to see in his cruel work the hand of an avenging God. Truly, the blood of the martyrs was amply avenged when the whole city became a veritable Aceldama, or field of blood. It was before that generation had passed away that Jerusalem was besieged and destroyed. There was a sufficient interval for the full proclamation of the Gospel by the Apostles and evangelists of the early Christian Churchand for the gathering out of those who recognized the Crucified Christ as their true Messiah. Then came the awful ending which the Savior foresaw and foretold.

51 . Woe unto you, lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge: you did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in, you hindered. This Woe is similar to that pronounced upon the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, and it was a terrible charge to be brought against them by Him who could read their hearts and who could truthfully say to them, You have taken away the key of knowledge: you did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in, you hindered. They ought to have helped men into the Kingdom. Instead of doing so, they hindered those who were entering. Are there not false teachers, nowadays, who put stumbling stones instead of steppingstones in the way of those who are entering the Kingdom of Heaven?

53, 54. And as He said these things unto them, the scribes and Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to provoke Him to speak of many things: laying wait for Him and seeking to catch something out of His mouth that they might accuse Him. Thus they proved the truth of the accusations that He had brought against them! But all their plots and traps were in vain until the hour appointed for His great Sacrifice to be offered on Calvary.

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 #898 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A WORD WITH THOSE WHO WAIT FOR SIGNS AND WONDERS   
NO. 898

DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 31, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,   
This is an evil generation: they seek a sign.   
Luke 11:29.

READING the Old Testament we observe that the Lord, in the olden times, condescendingly gave signs to His servants when He saw that it would be for their good. Moses, when he was called to undertake the great work of bringing the chosen people up out of Egypt and conducting them into the promised land, had a sign given him by which to assure him that he was truly called of God. He put his hand into his bosom and when he took it out it was leprous, white as snow. He thrust it into his bosom again and again removed it and, lo, it was whole as the other! He cast his rod upon the earth and the rod became a serpent, and when he took it by the tail, it stiffened into a rod again.

So also in the case of Gideon, when he was commanded to go against the Midianite oppressors of Israel, you remember how his fleece was wet when all around was dry. And how the sign was reversed and when all around was saturated with moisture, the fleece was dry. In the cases of holy men favored with signs, there was faith. There was a real desire for more faith and a willing obedience to God. But the work to which the men were called was peculiar, difficult and even superhuman! And the flesh being but weak, God in infinite tenderness to the weakness of His servants, gave them signs and wonders that they might be strengthened.

Doubtless, if again there should come a necessity for signs to any of Gods servants, such tokens would be given them. If there should ever be a time when it was not possible for Christians to walk by faith alone, or when it would be more to the honor of God that their confidence should be somewhat assisted by marvels and tokens, then would God go out of the ordinary way once again and His people should receive miraculous seals. If it were utterly impossible for the anxious and truly penitent spirit to find rest without a sign, I believe the sign would be given. I also believe that in no case is such a thing at all necessary under the present Gospel dispensation which is so enriched with the most plain evidence, and that to add more would be to hold a candle to the sun, or pour water into the ocean.

In addition to this first remark, let us add that signs have been given and yet have not worked faith in those who have seen them, and there is no necessary connection between seeing signs and believing that which the signs attest. Israel in the wilderness saw great marvels worked by the Lord their God and yet perished in unbelief. Pharaoh is a still more notable instancewhat signs and wonders God worked in the fields of Zoan! How was the Nile crimsoned into blood and all Egypt filled with lamentation! The Lord turned the dust of the land into lice and the ashes into plagues! He brought up frogs into their chambers and locusts devoured their fields. He darkened the heavens at midday and deluged them with hail and rain such as the land had never seen before!

A grievous disease fell upon their cattle and death upon their firstbornyet all the wonders which God worked did not soften Pharaohs heart and, though, for awhile he trembled, yet again he steeled himself against the God of Israel and said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice? My Hearers, if you do not believe Moses and the Prophets. If you do not believe in Jesus Christ with the testimonies which are already before you, neither would you believe though one rose from the dead, or though all the plagues of Egypt should be repeated upon you with tenfold fury! There is no necessary connection between the seeing of wonders and the believing in God! We learn clearly from Pharaohs case and from many others that all the displays of wonderful power, either of judgment or of mercy, do not beget faith in unbelieving hearts.

I come, this morning, to deal with a class of persons very commonly still among usexceedingly common in all congregations where the Gospel its faithfully preachedwhom I shall attempt to describe, in the first place, and then go on to deal with them as God shall help me.

I. First, then, I shall ask your attention while I DESCRIBE THE PERSONS who are an evil generation that seek after a sign. We have among us many individuals who are aware that they are sinners and are conscious of their guilt to such an extent as to be very uneasy as to their condition. They dearly perceive that sin will be punished by the Great Judge and they are much afraid of the wrath to come. They anxiously desire, moreover, to find salvation, and, having long listened to the Gospel, they are not ignorant of the way in which salvation is obtained. They understand the Gospel in the letter of it to the highest degree.

They are not unbelievers in any of the doctrines of the Gospel. They accept the Deity of Christ. They believe Him to be verily the Son of God. They believe that He died upon the Cross and offered Atonement for iniquity. They, moreover, know that this atone-merit is effectual for the putting away of transgressions and they are persuaded that if they had an interest in it, it would wash away their sins and would give them peace of mind. You will say to me, Knowing all this, of course they are Believers in Christ. No, they are not. We are very hopeful of them but we are, at the same time, much alarmed about them.

They are not Believers, for they willfully persist in demanding some sign or wonder within themselves, or around themselves, before they will personally put their trust in the Lord Jesus. Having been taught all they have been taught and accepting for the Truth of God all that they do accept, the logical inference would be that they trust in Christ and are savedbut illogical as their state is they still remain unbelievers, with all this belief about themand they justify their remaining in unbelief by telling you that if they felt this, or if they saw that, or if this happened, or if the other thing occurred, then they would believe in Jesus, but not until then! They make different demands. There are some, and these are generally the most uneducated, who expect to experience remarkable dreams or to behold singular visions.

I am sometimes astonished that there should linger among our population, still, a notion that a certain kind of dream, especially if it is repeated a number of times and if it is so vivid as to remain upon the imagination for a long period, is an index of the Divine favor. Nothing can be more grossly untrue! Nothing can be more baseless and without the shadow of evidence to back it up! And yet many imagine that if they, I was about to say, suffered so grievously from indigestion that their sleep was spoiled by vivid dreams, then they could put their trust in Jesus Christ! The notion is so absurd, that if it is but mentioned to rational men they must ridicule it and yet I have known many who have been, and still are, slaves to this delusion!

Not very long ago, after preaching in a remote country village, I was earnestly sought for as a spiritual adviser by an importunate letter from a woman who ascribed to me much greater wisdom than I ever claimed to possess. I wondered what her spiritual difficulty was, and when I went to her house and found her very sick, I was saddened to find her the victim of a superstition in which, I fear, her minister had comforted and so confirmed her. She solemnly informed me that she had seen something standing at night at the foot of her bed. She was in hopes that it was our blessed Lord, but she could not see his head. As I knew so much of spiritual things, could I tell her who it was? I said I thought she must have hung up her dress on a peg on the wall at the foot of her bed and in the dark had mistaken it for an apparition.

Of course, that did not satisfy her. I fell at once in her estimation to the dead level of a very carnal-minded man, if not a scoffer, but I could not help itI could not dally with such ridiculous superstitionI was obliged to tell her it was all nonsense for her to hope for salvation because she was silly enough to fancy that she saw Jesus with her bodily eyes, for the saving sight was a spiritual one. As to the question of the supposed apparition having a head or not, I told her if she would but use her own head and heart in meditating upon the Word of God, she would be in a far more hopeful condition.

There may have been, I will not deny itfor stranger things have happenedthere may have been dreams and even apparitions which have aroused the conscience and so led to the commencement of spiritual life in some rare cases where God has chosen specially to interfere. But that these are to be

looked for and to be expected is a thing as far from the Truth of God as the east is from the west! What if you did see anything or dream anythingwhat would that prove? Why, prove nothing whatever except that you were in an ill state of health and that your imagination was morbidly active. Put such things awaythey are superstitions fit for Bushmen and Hottentotsbut they are not fit for Christians of the 19th Century! I do but mention them, not because I think any of you may have fallen into them, but that you may deal with them always very rigidly wherever you meet with them.

They are superstitions not to be tolerated by Christian men, yet there are some who actually will not believe Christs simple Gospel unless some such absurdity as this can be joined into it. God deliver you from such unbelief! Others we have met with who suppose that in order to be saved they must feel some very peculiar physical sensation. Now, that joy and peace of mind and the discovery of the Gospel when it for the first time flashes on the mind may produce extraordinary sensations in the body through the force of mental emotion, I do not doubt. But do, I pray you, remember that the Divine Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ has nothing to do with nerves and muscles and sinew and things to be seen and to be felt in the flesh. The operations of Grace are a mental, spiritual, work!

My dear Hearers, you must never imagine, when we talk about the heart, that we mean that central organ within us from which the blood circulates. We mean nothing which has to do with this fleshly organizationthe work of the Holy Spirit concerns itself with the mind, the affections, the soul, the spirit, and His work is altogether spiritual. God forbid that you should look for any physical work, or strange affection of nerve and sinew, as some have talked of and others have looked for. You must not put physical contortions or sensations as a test before the Lord and say you will not believe in Him otherwise. These, I hope, are rare cases, but in very frequent instances I have met with people who will not believe in Jesus Christ to the salvation of their souls because they have not felt wretched enough.

They have read in certain books of holy men who, when they were seeking a Savior, were broken in pieces under the ponderous hammer of the Law. They turn to such biographies and they find the subjects of them uttering language similar to the book of Job, or to the words of Jeremy in the Lamentations. Now these were good and holy men and the way by which they were led to Christ was a way trod by many feet, but these persons say, Unless I can feel just this. Unless I can be led into despair. Unless I can be tempted to destroy myself. Unless I become so desponding that I am more fit for a lunatic asylum than to be in my own family, I cannot believe in Jesus Christ.

Ah, poor demented one, to desire misery and to make your own wretchedness and even your own unbelieving and wicked thoughts of God to be a kind of preparation for faith in Jesus Christ! It is a most insanely wicked thing and yet many, many, many persist in unbelief because they think they are not yet wretched enough! Running to the other extreme, I have met with others who would not simply trust Christ because they were not happy enough. They have heard of the Christians joys and the peace, like a river, that evermore abides, and they have said, If I could get this peace. If this deep calm ruled in my spirit, then I could believe. As much as to say, If I saw the wheat full grown in the fields of my soul, then I would begin to sowwhereas the sowing must precede the reaping! If I had within me the flower in all its beauty and bloom, then I would begin to plant the rootwhereas the root must always precede the flower!

Peace of mind is the result of faith, but it demands that it shall be the result of faith before you can exercise faith. In truth, they come to God and ask for the wages before the work is begun! They demand peace before they will believe! Believe me, if any of you thus act willfully and strangely, you must not suppose that God will turn aside from His wise proceedings to gratify your whims. Ah, no! You may tempt the Lord, but He is not tempted of any man. What folly it is and yet folly as it is, how common is it on all sides! I have met with some who would not believe in Christ because they could not pray eloquently. Oh, they have said, if I could pray like So-and-So, to whom we have listened with the greatest pleasure at the Prayer Meetings, then I could put my trust in Christ and there would be some hope for me!

Now, praying fluently is sometimes only the result of oratorical gifts and if you will never believe in Christ till you get oratorical gifts, then how foolish you are to shut yourself out from Heaven because you cannot play the orator! Because you cannot be a preacher, do you refuse to be a child of God? True, fluency in prayer may also be the result of great depth of piety, but do you expect to have a great depth of piety before you even have the beginning of Divine Grace in your soul? Before you will put your trust in Christ and become a babe in His family, you claim you must be a man six feet tall? Before you will learn the A B C of the language of Canaan, you declare that you must be able to sound its very hardest syllables and pronounce its most difficult sentences? That which is frequently the result of years of training and long habit of deep, solitary contemplation, you expect to leap into at once, or else you refuse to be saved?

O Madness, to what height will you not mount?! I have known others who must feel precisely like certain eminent saints have felt many years after their conversion, or else they cannot believe that they are saved. They will reach down the life of some holy man who had mastered his passions by long years of mortificationwho had come to live near to God and whose life was the heavenly life on earth, and they will mentally vowI must be just like this man, or else I cannot believe in Jesus. They say, in fact, to the Heavenly Physician, I am sick and ready to die, but, Good Physician, You must make me as strong as Samson at once, and on the spot, or else I will not receive Your medicinejust as if the perfect spiritual cure of the soul were not a lifelong work of Grace!

They expect to be made perfect in an instant, or they will not trust the ever faithful Savior. They look for the mature fruits of autumn in the early spring and even if they bear even so much as a bud or blossom, they must have the full ripe fruit or else they will not believe. Well, this is marvelous and truly, if there is anything amazing on earth beside the mercy of God it is the perversity of man, and the strange way in which unbelief will dare impudently to set up one demand after another as an excuse for rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have met this mischief at other times in a somewhat indescribable shape. Sir, says the young convert, you tell me that if I simply put my trust in Jesus I shall be saved. But is not salvation a great mystery? Our reply must honestly be, No doubt it is. Well, then, they determine to wait until they are the subjects of some singular feeling, some mysterious phenomenon within themselves. It is not to be denied that the work of Divine Grace by the Holy Spirit in the soul is the greatest of all mysteries, but it is never, also, to be forgotten that it is one of the grandest of all simplicities! The mysteries of the church of Rome are mock mysteries rendered dark by the veil which she casts over the Truth of God. By her incantations, her paraphernalia, her performances and her use of a strange tongue, that which is simple is darkened into a mimic mysteryfor what is really in it is a plain lie for thoughtful men to laugh at!

This is a kind of mystery of which the Gospel knows nothing. The mysteries of regeneration are not artificial, but natural. Now all natural mysteries in the world are, from another point of view, clear simplicities. Light, we know what it is, we see it every day. It is the greatest of all mysteries, yet practically it is the most common of all simplicities. When the sun scatters the darkness, there is no mystery about it. Or when we light a candle, there is no need of wonder. Light is a wondrous mystery, yet to obtain it, the least educated need not go to school. The electric telegraph is practically, as a matter of every day use, so simplified that a lad may officiate at the instrument and yet it remains and ever will remain a mystery.

Understand that such is the mystery of regeneration. It is so mysterious that no one can explain it, but it is so simple that everyone that believes in Christ has experienced it already! It is so mysterious that if the most learned authors were composed to define it, all the writers in the world might fail in the definition. But it is such a simplicity that whoever believes in Jesus Christ is born of God. There is nothing mysterious about it, I was about to say, in the artificial meaning of that word mystery. The only mystery lies in the operation of the Holy Spirit whose coming and going we cannot comprehend. If you believe, you have felt the mystery! If you trust Jesus, you possess the mystery! All that is meant in regeneration, all that is wrapped up in the work of the Holy Spirit actually belongs to every soul that has believed in Jesus Christ and in Him only!

But I know what it is, you will go to Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, but you will not come to the blood of Christ and wash and be clean! You will say, I thought he would surely come and strike his hand over the place and call upon the name of the Lord his God and recover the leper, but you cannot accept the simple word, Believe and live, so grand in its simplicity. The most of men reject the Gospel for that very reason of its simplicity. Signs and wonders they will still demandsomething artificially mysterious their soul still craves afterbut the naked grandeur of the sublime mystery of faith they cannot perceive. Their folly is clear enough to all men that have eyes.

I have just described the character and if any have felt themselves portrayed this morning, I hope they will prepare their hearts for what will follow and be willing to receive my Masters Word.

II. I shall now, secondly, show THE FOLLY OF SUCH CONDUCT. My dear Friend, I get you by the hand and look you in the face, anxiously desiring, as I do, that you may be saved this very morning. You are seeking a sign, one of these which I have described, or some other. You seek what is quite unnecessary. What do you need a sign for? You need, you say, a token of Gods love. What token of Gods love to you can ever be needed, now that He has given His only-begotten Sonfirst to live on earth and then to die in extreme pains, the Just for the unjustthat whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life?

I blush for you, that you should ask any token of Gods love while Jesus Christ is before youfor herein is such love as nothing else can ever equal! What do you need a sign for? Why, to show, you say, that there is mercy for you. How do you need that? The very fact that you are alive shows how merciful God is! Had He been unmerciful, He would long ago have cut you down, for what are you but a cumberer of the ground, with your heart full of evil devices at this very moment, at enmity against Him? I know you are so, or otherwise you would not be so hard to lead to faith, yet are you spared by His mercy! Is not that proof enough?

And, moreover, the Gospel is preached to you. You are told that, he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He must be a good God who lets you hear such a Gospel and who bids me plead with you, as though Christ pleaded with you, that you would lay hold of Him. Why, the Gospel itself is the greatest of signs and wonders! Why do you need more that that? Oh, you say, can the Gospel save me? My dear Friend, you do not need any sign to prove that! You have your own relatives, your own sons and daughters who have been saved. You are a witness to what Divine Grace has done for themwhat more evidence can you require? Remember the dying bed of your sainted mother! Remember the joyous departure of your brother, or your converted child! Evidently Grace did wonders for them. What more do you need to convince you?

Mark you, if you did not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. If you did not believe that His blood could cleanse from sin, I might talk somewhat differently to you. But you do believe all this and I say, in the name of all that is reasonable, what makes you ask for any greater sign than the signs which God has already given you? You are seeking for altogether unnecessary things! You are also asking for useless signs. What evidence could there be now, for instance, in mere dejection of spirit? You want to feel miserable, you saywhat evidence would that be of your salvation? It seems to me that you are like a man who should say that he would catch hold of a rope if he could sink so many fathoms deeper in the ocean, or that he would avail himself of a hospital if his disease were so much worse. How strange that a rational man should talk like this!

Despair is no help to faith. Sinful doubts cannot assist you to Christ they may most effectually keep you from Him   
*Why those fears, poor trembling Sinner? Why those anxious, gloomy fears?   
Doubts and fears can never save you,   
Life is never won by tears!   
Tis believing,   
Which the soul to Christ endears.   
Tears, though flowing like a river,   
Never can one sin efface.   
Jesus tears would not avail you   
Blood alone can meet your case.   
Fly to Jesus!   
Life is found in His embrace.*

Oh, but you say, I have desired to feel ecstatic joy! But if you did, how could that help you to believe in Christ? Your joy might be no more than worldlings feel when their wealth increases. It might spring of mere excitement. It might all be based upon a lie and your joy might be your damnation! O Man, Christ is worthy of confidence, but your joys and your sorrows are not! They may be good or they may be bad, they may be hopeful or they may be delusive. Why do you look at them, or seek another foundation than God has laid? Your feelings are fickle things. Believe and live!

Are you not also seeking most unreasonable things? To ask a sign from God when He pledges His Word seems to me to be out of all reason. You are a beggar, remember, and we have an old proverb that beggars must not be choosers. Above all, how dare a beggar demand a sign before he will receive an alms? I am walking in the street and am accosted by a hungry man and if I offer him a loaf of bread, is he to refuse to take it unless I will fly in the air or help him to turn a stone into bread? Let the man starve, Sir, you will say, if he is so unreasonable as to demand a sign. And yet that is just like you! You will not take the mercy which the Gospel freely offers you, which God even commands you to acceptyou will not take it unless some astonishing sign or wonder shall be worked in you!   
Let your folly appear still further when I remind you that you are asking for unpromised signs. God has promised that everyone that believes in Jesus Christ shall live. He has promised to hear prayer. But He has never promised to give any one of you a sign or a wonder! And yet you will ask Him to give you a sign which He has never promised and dare not ask Him to give you eternal life which He has promised? Folly indeed! Some of you are seeking for injurious signs. That depression of spirit which some think would be such an encouragement to them, why it is even sinful! And how should I ask a sinful thing of God? To be distracted in my mind. To be so depressed and melancholy as to make myself and all my household miserableis that a good thing? It is a great sin against God! And am I to ask God to give me this sign in order to help me to believe?

Thoughts of suicide! Why, my Brothers and Sisters, they are awful they are not to be allowed! There is murder in them! He that even thinks of them has committed murder already in his heart! And are these terrible, these devilish things, to be helps to you to believe? Why, they would just drive you into Hell! How can they help you to Heaven? You are asking for that which would be your ruin. You ask for a scorpion. You ask for a stone. You ask for a serpent and then you think that after having all these evil things you would be more fit to receive the bread of the Divine blessing? God will deny you, I trust, what you so foolishly ask for. Oh, be content to be led in a gentler way! Be willing to be blown to Christ by the soft south windask not for tempests! Be satisfied to be drawn by the cords of love! Demand not by the bands of a mandemand not whips and chains! Enquire not for the thunder and lightning of Sinaibe satisfied with the turtle-notes of Calvary

**Hark! the voice of Jesus calling,   
Come, you laden, come to Me,   
I have rest and peace to offer   
Rest, poor laboring one, for you.   
Take salvation,   
Take it** now and **happy be.   
Life is found alone in Jesus,   
Only there tis offered you   
Offered without price or money,   
Tis the gift of God sent free!   
Take salvation,   
Take it** now and **happy be.**

Remember, my dear Hearers, that some of you who are not believing are seeking signs which others have never had. To give you an instance or two. There stood the prodigal son feeding the swine, so hungry that he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks. The thought crossed his mind, I will arise and go unto my father. What sign had he? He sets off to seek his fathers face. What sign had he, I say? There does not appear to have been even an invitation sent, but he sought his father and he found forgiveness. Take another case. Christ has likened seeking souls to the widow who sought help of the unjust judge. She cried to him. She continued to cry to him until she gained her suit! But what sign had she? If any sign, it was all negativeall from the opposite quarteryet on she went.

Look at the Canaanite woman. She desired that her daughter might be healed. What sign had she? Christ said, It is not meet to take the childrens bread and cast it to dogs. Instead of a sign to help her it was a hard word to discourage her, but yet she won her suit! And why not you, my Hearers, why not you? The poor woman who touched the hem of Christs garment in the press of the crowd, what sign had she of His willingness to help her? It was her own earnest, intense desire and her faith in Jesus that made her touch the hem out of which the virtue came. Wait not, then, for signs to be given to you when they have not been given to others, but do as others have done and obtain the like blessing.

III. I shall now need a few minutes more and your very serious attention, while I now LAY BARE YOUR SINS, your grievous sins. My dear Hearers, in the first place, you make God a liar. Is not this the testimony of the Holy Spirit, he that believes not has made God a liar? How do we treat liars? If they tell us a thing, we say, I am doubtful of it. We need more evidence. Now, I feel persuaded that many of you respect even me so well that if I made a statement you would accept it without any further evidence.

But here is the Everlasting God who declares that whoever trusts His Son shall be saved and you practically give Him the liefor if you believed what He testifies, since you want to be savedyou would surely trust His Son! But you practically say, We do not believe it. We do not believe it! We need more evidence. We need a sign and a wonder. You make God a liar. In the next place, you insult Gods Sovereignty. He has a right to give signs or not, as He wills, but you, as it were, say, You shall give me a sign or else I will be damned. I will not have Your mercy if I cannot have it in my own way. Great God, I will not be saved unless I can feel as I want to feel. I have a whim in my mind as to how the work of Grace shall be worked, and if it begins not as I think best, I will sooner make my bed in Hell than accept Your Son.

Is the preacher too hard on you? Ah, it is love that makes me hard! In truth, it is you who are hard with GOD! And hard with your own souls. O fling away this accursed pride of yours and kiss His silver scepter and say, Lord, save me as You will. I believe, help You my unbelief. I must tell you what is moreyou are acting the part of an idolater. What does an idolater do? He says, I cannot believe in an unseen God. I must have a golden calf or an image that I can see with my eyes and touch with my hands. You say just the same. You cannot believe Gods naked Word you demand something you can feel, something you can see. Sheer idolatry!

Do you not see it? You make your own feelings and emotions, or strange impressions, to be more worthy of trust than even God Himself! You make them idols and put them into Gods place. You, so far as you can, undiefy the Deity. O tremble at such a crime as this! Do you not see, moreover, that you crucify the Savior? Those who nailed His hands to the tree were not greater sinners, even if they were so great, as you are who say to Him, Bleeding Savior, I believe that You have died on the Cross. I believe that Your blood could cleanse my sin, but I cannot trust You to do it. I have no confidence in You. I cannot, will not trust You. I trust my husband, but I cannot trust my Savior. I trust my child, but I cannot trust my God. I trust my minister, but I cannot trust the Son of God exalted in the highest heavens.

Why, this is crucifying Himthis is treating Him as a dog should be treated! I know not what can be worse than this! Nails in His hands are not more cruel than this mistrust of His deep love and His Divine power. Ah, says one, I do not mean that, but I need to see the work of the Holy Spirit in my soul. Ah, then, I have another charge to bring against you you are wanting to trust in the work of the Holy Spirit instead of trusting in the work of Jesus Christ! There is no text in all the Bible which tells you to make the work of the Holy Spirit the foundation of your confidence! Nowhere is it set forth as the ground for a sinners reliance! It occupies quite another place. If you try to put the work of the Spirit where the work of Christ should be, you grieve the Holy Spirit, for the very last thing that ever the Holy Spirit would do would be to supplant the Lamb of God!

It is His office and mission to glorify Christ! How, then, shall He supplant Him? When you say, I cannot trust the blood, I cannot trust the righteousness of Christ. I must have something from the Holy Spirit to trust to, you do, as it were, try to make a clash between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of Christand this grieves the Spirit to the last degree.

IV. Ah, I have thought over this subject carefully and I have tried to speak upon it earnestly, but I am conscious when I have done my best that you will go on in this folly and continue still in this sin. Yet I do pray the Holy Spirit that it may not be so, for now during the last few minutes I desire to show YOU YOUR DANGER as I have shown you your folly and sin. My dear Friends, you are in danger of death! You admit that, and now, suppose you die in the state you are in? Why, you are almost saved! You are awakened, you are aroused, you have many good desires, but a man who is only almost saved will be altogether damned!

There was a householder who almost bolted his door at night, but the thief came in. A prisoner was condemned to be hanged and was almost pardoned, but he hung on the gallows. A ship was almost saved from shipwreck, but she went to the bottom with all hands on board. A fire was almost extinguished, but it consumed a city. A man almost decided remains to perish in the flames of Hell! So is it with you unless you believe! All these things which you possess of good desire and emotion shall be of no service to you at all, for, he that believes not shall be damned. Remember, Friend, you may be damned before the sun goes down today the flames of Hell may enclose you before the sun shall gild another morning with his light.

O seek the Savior now while the Gospel message comes with fresh power on this Lords-Day! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, for, he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.

**Soon that voice will cease its calling,   
Now it speaks and speaks to you   
Sinner, heed the gracious message,   
To the blood for refuge flee!   
Take salvation,   
Take it** now and **happy be.**

There is one other thing of which you are in danger, namely, that if you are spared for years to come, yet, through long procrastination your conscience may become seared as with a hot iron. If you believe this day, whatever you may have been, your sins are all forgiven you in a moment. If you do now look to Christ upon Calvary and trust your soul with Him, you shall now live, for

*There is life in a look at the Crucified One,*

*There is life at this moment for you.*   
But if you will look to your good works, to your preparations, to your fears, to your joysif, indeedyou look to anything but Christ, it may be the Holy Spirit will never strive with you againyour conscience will become hardened and you, being given up to your idols, will perish, utterly perish, under the sound of the Gospelperish with the light of the Gospel shining on your eyeballs! Perish of the serpent bite while the bronze serpent is lifted high! Perish of thirst when the Water of Life runs rippling at your feet because you are not content to stoop down and take it as God presents it to you! O that you would this very day end these follies and these sins, believing in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit!

*Jesus, the eternal Son of God, Whom seraphim obey,   
The bosom of the Father leaves And enters human clay.*

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONLuke 11:14-44.***  
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #1600 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A GREATER THAN SOLOMON   
NO. 1600

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 6, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Behold, a greater than Solomon is here.   
Luke 11:31.**

OUR first thought is that no mere man would have said this concerning himself unless he had been altogether eaten up with vanity, for Solomon was, among the Jews, the very ideal of greatness and wisdom. It would be an instance of the utmost self-conceit if any mere man were to say of himselfA greater than Solomon is here. Any person who was really greater and wiser than Solomon would be the last man to claim such preeminence. A wise man would never think it; a prudent man would never say it! The Lord Jesus Christ, if we regard Him as a mere man, would never have uttered such an expression, for a more modest, self-forgetting man was never found in all our race.

View it on the supposition that the Christ of Nazareth was a mere man and I say that His whole conduct was totally different from the spirit which would have suggested an utterance like thisA greater than Solomon is here. For men to compare themselves with one another is not wise and Christ was wiseit is not humbleand Christ was humble. He would not have spoken thus if there had not been cause and reason in His infinitely glorious Nature. It was because the Divinity within Him must speak out. For God to say that He is greater than all His creatures is no boast, for what are they in His sight? All worlds are but sparks from the anvil of His Omnipotence! Space, time, eternityall these are as nothing before Him and for Him to compare or even to contrast Himself with one of His own creatures is supreme condescension, let Him word the comparison how He may!

It was the Divine within our Lord which made Him say and not even then with a view to exalt Himself, but with a view to point the moral that He was trying to bring before the peopleA greater than Solomon is here. He did as good as say, The queen of the south came from a distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but you refuse to hear Me. She gave attention to a man, but you will not regard your God. You will not listen to the Incarnate Deity who tells you words of infinite, Infallible Wisdom. Our Lord Jesus is aiming at His hearers good and where the motive is so disinterested there remains no room for criticism. He tells them that He is greater than Solomon to convince them of the greatness of their crime in refusing to listen to the messages of love with which His lips were loaded.

Foreigners came from afar to Solomon but, I, says Jesus, have come to your door and brought infinite wisdom into your very gates and yet you refuse Me. Therefore the queen of the south shall rise up in judgment against you, for, in rejecting Me, you reject a greater than Solomon. The second thought that comes to ones mind is thisnotice the selfconsciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows who He is and what He is and He is not lowly in spirit because He is ignorant of His own greatness. He was meek and lowly in heartServus servorum, as the Latins were known to call Him, Servant of servants, but all the while He knew that He was Rex Regum, or King of Kings. He takes a towel and He washes His disciples feet and all the while He knows that He is their Master and their Lord. He associates with publicans and harlots and dwells with the common peopleand all the while He knows that He is the Only-Begotten of the Father.

He sits as a Child in the Temple listening to and asking questions of the rabbis. He stands among His disciples as though He were one of them, conversing with the ignorant and foolish of the day, seeking their good and He knows that He is not one of themHe knows that He has nothing to learn from them. He knows that He is able to teach senates and to instruct kings and philosophers, for He is greater than Solomon. He wears a peasants garb and has nowhere to lay His head and He knows that whatever the lowliness of His condition, He is greater than Solomon! He lets us perceive that He knows it, that all may understand the love which brought Him down so low. It is grand humility on Christs part that He condescends to be our Servant, our Saviorwhen He is so great that the greatest of men are as nothing before Him!

He counted it not robbery to be equal with God. Mark that. And yet He made Himself of no reputation. Some people do not know their own worth and so, when they stoop to a lowly office it is no stoop to their minds, for they do not know their own abilities. They do not know to what they are equal. But Christ did knowHe knew all about His own Deity, His own wisdom and greatness as Man. I admire, therefore, the clear understanding which sparkles in His deep humiliation like a gem in a dark mine. He is not one who stoops down according to the old rhyme

*As needs be must who cannot sit upright,* but He is one who comes down wittingly from His Throne of Glory, marking each step and fully estimating the descent which He is making. The

cost of our Redemption was known to Him and He endured the Cross, despising the shame. Watts well sings   
*This was compassion like a God,   
That when the Savior knew   
The price of pardon was His blood,   
His pity never withdrew.*   
Brethren, if our Savior, Himself, said that He was greater than Solomon, you and I must fully believe it, enthusiastically admit it and prepare to proclaim it! If others will not acknowledge it, let us be the more prompt to confess it. If He Himself had to say, before they would acknowledge it, A greater than Solomon is here, let it not be necessary that the saying should be repeated, but let us all confess that He is, indeed, greater than Solomon! Let us go home with this resolve in our minds, that we will speak greater things of Christ than we have done! That we will try to love Him more, serve Him better and make Him in our own estimation and in the worlds, greater than He has ever been. Oh for a glorious high throne to set Him on and a crown of stars to place upon His head! Oh to bring nations to His feet!   
I know my words cannot honor Him according to His meritsI wish they could. I am quite sure to fail in my own judgment when telling out His excellence. Indeed, I grow less and less satisfied with my thoughts and language concerning Him. He is too glorious for my feeble language to describe Him. If I could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, I could not speak worthily of Him. If I could borrow all the harmonies of Heaven and enlist every harp and song of the glorified, yet were not the music sweet enough for His praises! Our glorious Redeemer is ever-blessedlet us bless Him! He is to be extolled above the highest heavenslet us sound forth His praises! Oh for a well-tuned harp! May the Spirit of God help both heart and lips to extol Him at this hour!   
First, then, we shall try to draw a parallel between Jesus and Solomon. Secondly, we will break away from all comparisons and show where there cannot be any parallel between Christ and Solomon at all.   
I. First, then, BETWEEN CHRIST AND SOLOMON there are some points of likeness. When the Savior Himself gives us a comparison, it is a clear proof that a likeness was originally intended by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, we may say without hesitation that Solomon was meant to be a type of Christ. I am not going into detail, nor am I about to refine upon small matters, but I shall give you five points in which Solomon was conspicuously like Christ and in which our Lord was greater than Solomon. O for help in the great task before me!   
And, first, in wisdom. Whenever you talked about Solomon to a Jew, his eyes began to flash with exultation. His blood leaped in his veins with national pride. Solomonthat name brought to mind the proudest time of Davids dynasty, the age of gold! Solomon, the magnificent, why, surely, his name crowns Jewish history with glory and the brightest beam of that glory is his wisdom! In the east, and I think I may say in the west, it still remains a proverb, To be as wise as Solomon. No modern philosopher or learned monarch has ever divided the fame of the Son of David, whose name abides as the synonym of wisdom. Of no man since could it be said as of him, And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart.   
He intermeddled with all knowledge and was a master in all sciences. He was a naturalistAnd he spoke of trees, from the cedar trees that are in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springs out of the wall. He spoke, also, of beasts and of fowl and of creeping things and of fishes. He was an engineer and architect, for he wrote, I made great works. I built houses. I planted vineyardsI made gardens and orchards and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits. I made pools of water, to water the wood that brings forth trees. He was one who understood the science of governmentpolitician of the highest order. He was everything, in fact. God gave Him wisdom and largeness of heart, says the Scripture, like the sand of the sea. And Solomons wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame was in all nations round about. Yes, but our Savior knows infinitely more than Solomon! I want you, tonight, to come to Him just as the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon, only for weightier reasons. You do not need to learn anything concerning architecture or navigation, agriculture or anatomy. You only need to know how you shall be built up a spiritual house and how you shall cross those dangerous seas which lie between this land and the Celestial City!   
Well, you may come to Jesus and He will teach you all that you need to know, for all wisdom is in Christ! Our Divine Savior knows things past and present and futurethe secrets of God are with Him. He knows the inmost heart of God, for no one knows the Father except the Son and He to whom the Son shall reveal Him. To Him it is given to take the book of prophetic decree and loose the seven seals! Come, then, to Christ Jesus if you want to know the mind of God, for it is written that He, is made unto us Wisdom. Solomon might have wisdom, but he could not be wisdom to others. Christ Jesus is that to the fullest! In the multifarious knowledge which He possessesthe universal knowledge which is stored up in Himthere is enough for your guidance and instruction even to the end of life, however intricate and overshadowed your path may be. Solomon proved his wisdom, in part, by his remarkable inventions. We cannot tell what Solomon did not know. At any rate, no man knows, at this present moment, how those huge stones which have lately been discoveredwhich were the basis of the ascent by which Solomon went up to the house of the Lordwere ever put into their places. Many of the stones of Solomons masonry are so enormous that scarcely could any modern machinery move them! And without the slightest cement they are put together so exactly that the blade of a knife could not be inserted between them! It is marvelous how the thing was done. How such great stones were brought from their original bed in the quarryhow the whole building of the temple was executednobody knows.   
The castings in brass and silver are scarcely less remarkable. No doubt many inventions have passed away from the knowledge of modern times, inventions as remarkable as those of our own age. We are a set of savages that are beginning to learn something, but Solomon knew and invented things which we shall, perhaps, rediscover in 500 years time. By vehement exertion this boastful 19th Century, wretched century as it is, will crawl towards the wisdom which Solomon possessed ages ago! Yet is Jesus greater than Solomon! As for inventions, Solomon is no inventor at all compared with Him who said, Deliver him from going down into the Pit, for I have found a ransom. O Savior, did You find out the way of our salvation? Did You bring into the world and carry out and execute the way by which Hell should be closed, and Heaven, once barred, should be set wide open? Then, indeed, are You wiser than Solomon!   
You are the Deviser of salvation, the Architect of the Church, the Author and Finisher of our faith! Solomon has left us some very valuable booksthe Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the matchless Song. But, oh, the words of Solomon fall far short of the Words of Jesus Christ, for they are spirit and life! The power of the Words of Jesus is infinitely greater than all the deep sayings of the Sage. Proverbial wisdom cannot match His sayings, nor can The Preacher rival His sermons! Even the Divine Song, itself, would remain without a meaningan allegory never to be explainedif it were not that Christ, Himself, is the Sum and Substance of it! Solomon may sing of Christ, but Christ is the Substance of the song! He is greater than Solomon in His teachings, for His wisdom is from above and leads men up to Heaven! Blessed are they that sit at His feet! Again, Solomon showed his wisdom in difficult judgments. You know how he settled the question between the two women concerning the childmany other puzzles Solomon solved and many other knots Solomon was able to untie. He was a great ruler and governora man wise in politics, in social economy and in commercewise in all human respects. But a greater than Solomon is present where Christ is! There is no difficulty which Christ cannot remove, no knot which He cannot untie, no question which He cannot answer. You may bring your hard questions to Him and He will answer them! And if you have any difficulty on your heart tonight, do but resort to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer and search His Word and you shall hear a voice as from the sacred oracle which shall lead you in the path of safety.   
My point at this time, especially as we are coming to the Communion Table, is thisI want you that love the Lord Jesus Christ to believe in His infinite Wisdom and come to Him for direction. I fear that when you are in trouble, you half suppose that the great Keeper of Israel must have made a mistake. You get into such an intricate path that you say, Surely my Shepherd has not guided me right. Never think so! When you are poor and needy, still say, This, my poverty, was ordained by a greater than Solomon. What if you seem to be deprived of every comfort and you are brought into a strange and solitary way where you find no city to dwell in? Yet a Guide is near, and that Guide is not foolisha greater than Solomon is here!

I think I look, tonight, into a great furnace. It is so fierce that I cannot bear to gaze into its terrible blaze for fear my eyes should utterly fail me and lose the power of sight through the glare of that tremendous flame. I turn aside, for the fury of its flame overpowers me. But when I am strengthened to look again, I see ingots of silver refining in the white heat and I note that the heat is tempered to the last degree of nicety. I watch the process to the end and I say, as I behold those ingots brought out all clear and pure, refined from all dross and ready for the heavenly treasury, Behold, a greater than Solomon was in that furnace work! So you will find it, O Sufferer! Infinite Wisdom is in your lot. Come, poor Child, do not begin to interfere with your Saviors better judgment, but let Him order all things. Do not let your little, Know, ever rise up against the great knowledge of your dear Redeemer! Think of this when you wade in deep waters and comfortably whisper to yourselfA greater than Solomon is here. I have not time to enlarge and, therefore, I would have you notice, next, that our Lord Jesus Christ is greater than Solomon in wealth. This was one of the things for which Solomon was noted. He had great treasures he made gold to be as stones, and as for silver it was little accounted of, so rich did he become! He had multitudes of servants. I think He had 60,000 hewers in the mountains hewing out stones and wood, so numerous were the workmen he employed. His court was magnificent to the last degree. When you read of the food that was prepared to feed the court and of the stately way in which everything was arranged from the stables of the horses upwards to the ivory throne, you feel, like the queen of Sheba, utterly astonished, and say, The half was not told me!   
But, oh, when you consider all the wealth of Solomon, what poor stuff it is compared with the riches that are treasured up in Christ Jesus! Beloved, He who died upon the Cross and was indebted to a friend for a graveHe who was stripped, even, to the last rag before He diedHe who possessed no wealth but that of sorrow and sympathy, yet had about Him the power to make many rich and He has made multitudes richrich to all the intents of everlasting bliss! And, therefore, He must be rich Himself! Is He not rich who enriches millions? Why, our Lord Jesus Christ, even by a word, comforted those that were bowed down. When He stretched out His hand He healed the sick with a touch! There was a wealth about His every movement!   
He was a full man, full of all that man could desire to be full of! And now, seeing that He has died and risen again, there is in Him a wealth of pardoning love, a wealth of saving power, a wealth of intercessory might before the Fathers Thronea wealth of all things by which He enriches the sons of men and shall enrich them to all eternity! I want this Truth of God to come home to you! I want you to recognize the riches of Christ, you that are His people and, in addition, to remember the truth of our hymn   
*Since Christ is rich can I be poor?   
What can I need besides?*   
I wish we could learn to reckon what we are by what Christ is. An old man said, I am very old. I have lost my only son. I am penniless and, worst of all, I am blind. But, he added, this does not matter, for Christ is not infirm! Christ is not aged! Christ has all riches and He is not blind! And Christ is mine and I have all things in Him.   
Could you not get hold of that, somehow, Brothers and Sisters? Will not the Holy Spirit teach you the art of appropriating the Lord Jesus and all that He is and has? If Christ is your Representative, why then, you are rich in Him! Go to Him to be enriched! Suppose I were to meet a woman and I knew her husband to be a very wealthy man and that he loved her very much? And suppose she were to say to me, I am dreadfully poor. I do not know where to get raiment and food? Oh, I would think, this woman is out of her mind! If she has such a husband, surely she has only to go to him for all that she needs! And what if nothing is invested in her name? It is in his name and they are one and he will deny her nothing. I would say to her, My good woman, you must not talk in that fashion, or I will tell your husband on you.   
Well, I think that I shall have to say the same to you who are so very poor and cast down and yet are married to Jesus Christ! I shall have to tell your Husband on you, that you bring such complaints against Him, for all things are yours, for you are Christs and Christ is Gods! I say to you, lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees use the knees of prayer and the hands of faith and your estate will well content you. Do not think that you are married to Rehoboam who will beat you with scorpions, for you are joined to a greater than Solomon! Do not fancy that your heavenly Bridegroom is a beggarall the wealth of eternity and infinity is Hishow can you say that you are poor while all that He has is yours?   
Now, thirdly, and very briefly, indeed. There was one point about Solomon in which every Israelite rejoiced, namely, that he was the prince of peace. His name signifies peace. His father, David, was a great warrior, but Solomon had not to carry on war. His power was such that no one dared to venture upon a conflict with so great and potent a monarch. Every man throughout Israel sat under his vine and fig tree and no man was afraid. No trumpet of invader was heard in the land. Those were halcyon days for Israel when Solomon reigned! Ah, but in that matter, too, a greater than Solomon is herefor Solomon could not give his subjects peace of mind. He could not bestow upon them rest of heart. He could not ease them of their burden of guilt, or draw the arrow of conviction from their breast and heal its smart.   
But I preach to you tonight that blessed Man of Sorrows who has worked out our Redemption and who is greater than Solomon in His peace-giving power! Oh, come and trust Him! Then shall your peace be as a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Am I addressing one of Gods people who is sorely troubled, tumbled up and down in his thoughts? Brother or Sister, do not think that you must wait a week or two before you can recover your peace! You can become restful in a moment, for, He is our peaceeven Jesus, Himself, and He alone! And, oh, if you will but take Him at once, laying hold upon Him by the hands of faith as your Savior, this Man shall be your peace even when the Assyrian shall come into the land!   
There is no peace like the peace which Jesus givesit is like a river deep, profound, renewed, always flowing, overflowing, increasing and widening into an ocean of bliss. The peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind, through Jesus Christ. Oh, come to Him! Come to Him at this moment! Do not remain an hour away from your Noah, or rest, for with Him in the ark, your weary wings shall be tired no longer! You shall be safe and restful the moment you return to Him! The fruit of the Spirit is JOY. I want you to get that joy and to enter into this peace! Blessed combination, joy and peace! Peace, peacethere is music in the very word! Get it from Him who is the Word and whose voice can still a storm into a calm! A greater than Solomon is here to give you that peace! Beat the sword of your inward warfare into the plow-share of holy service. No longer sound an alarm, but blow the trumpet of peace in this the day of peace.   
A fourth thing for which Solomon was noted was his great works. Solomon built the Temple which was one of the seven wonders of the world in its time. A very marvelous building it must have been, but I will not stop to describe it, for time fails us. In addition to this he erected for himself palaces, constructed fortifications and made aqueducts and great pools to bring streams from the mountains to the various towns. He also founded Palmyra and Baalbecthose cities of the desertto facilitate his commerce with India, Arabia and other remote regions. He was a marvelous man! Earth has not seen his like. And yet a greater than Solomon is here, for Christ has brought the Living Water from the Throne of God right down to thirsty men, being Himself the eternal Aqueduct through which the heavenly current streams!   
Christ has built fortresses and munitions of defense behind which His children stand secure against the wrath of Hell! And He has founded and is daily finishing a wondrous Temple, His Church, of which His people are the living stones, fashioned, polished, rendered beautifula Temple which God, Himself, shall inhabit, for He dwells not in temples made with hands, that is to say, of this buildingbut He dwells in a Temple which He, Himself, does build, of which Christ is Architect and Builder, Foundation, and chief Cornerstone! And Jesus builds for eternity, an everlasting Temple and, when all visible things pass away and the very ruins of Solomons temple and Solomons aqueduct are scarcely to be discerned, what a sight will be seen in that New Jerusalem!   
The 12 courses of its foundations are of precious stones! Its walls dressed with rare diamonds! Its streets are paved with gold and its glory surpasses that of the sun! I am but talking figures, poor figures, too, for the Glory of the City of God is spiritual and where shall I find words with which to depict it? There, where the Lamb, Himself, is the Light and the Lord God, Himself, does dwell therethe whole edifice, the entire New Jerusalemshall be to the praise and the glory of His Grace who gave Jesus Christ to be the Builder of the house of His Glory, of which I hope we shall form a part forever and ever!   
Now, if Christ does such great works, I want you to come to Him, that He may work in you the work of God! That is the point. Come and trust Him at once! Trust Him to build you up. Come and trust Him to bring the Living Water to your lips. Come and trust Him to make you a Temple of the living God! Come, dear child of God, if you have great works to do, come and ask for the power of Christ with which to perform them! Come, you that would leave some memorial to the honor of the Divine name come to Him to teach and strengthen you! He is the wise Master Builder come and be workers together with Christ. Baptize your weakness into His infinite strength and you shall be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. God help you to do it!

Once more I draw the parallel upon the fifth point and I have done with it. Solomon was great as to dominion. The kingdom of the Jews was never anything like the size before or after that Solomon made it. It appears to have extended from the river of Egypt right across the wilderness far up to the Persian Gulf. We can scarcely tell how far Solomons dominions reached. They are said to have been from sea to sea and from the river even unto the ends of the earth. By one mode or another, he managed to bring various kings into subjection to him and he was the greatest monarch that ever swayed the scepter of Judah. But it is now all gone. Poor, feeble Rehoboam, dropped from his foolish hands the reins his father held. The kingdom was torn in pieces, the tributary princes found their liberty and the palmy days of Israel were over.   
On the contrary, our Lord Jesus Christ, at this moment has dominion over all things! God has set Him over all the works of His hands. Yes, shout it out among the heathen that the Lord reigns! The feet that were nailed to the tree are set upon the necks of His enemies! The hands that bore the nails sway, at this moment, the scepter of all worldsJesus is King of kings and Lord of lords! Hallelujah! Let universal Sovereignty be ascribed to the Son of Manto Him who was despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. Tell all, you saints, for your own comfort! The Lord reigns! Let the earth rejoice! Let the multitude of the isles be glad! Everything that happens in Providence is still under His sway and the time is coming when a moral and spiritual kingdom will be set up by Him which shall encompass the whole world!  
It does not look like it, does it? All these centuries have passed away and little progress has been made. Ah, but He comesand when He comes, or before He comes He shall overturn, overturn, overturnfor it is His right and God will give it to Him. And, as surely as God lives, unto Him shall every man bow the knee, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Do not be afraid! Do not measure difficulties, much less tremble at them! What is faith made for but to believe that which seems impossible? To expect universal dominion for Christ when everything goes well is but the expectation of reason! But to expect it when everything goes ill is the triumph of Abrahamic confidence! Look upon the great mountain and say, Who are you, O great mountain? Before the true Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. In the blackest midnight, when the ebony darkness stands thick and hard as granite before you, believe that at the mystic touch of Christ, the whole of it shall pass awayand at the brightness of His rising the eternal light shall dawn, never to be quenched! This is to act the part of a Believer and I ask you to act that part and believe to the fullest in Christ the Omnipotent! Why this stinted faith in an almighty arm? What a fidget we are in and what a worry seizes us if a little delay arises! Everything has to be done in the next 10 minutes or we count our Lord to be late! Is this part of wisdom? The Eternal has infinite leisurewho are we that we should hasten Him?   
*His purposes will ripen fast,   
Unfolding every hour.*   
A day is long to us, but a thousand years to Him are but as the twinkling of a star! Oh, rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, for the time shall come when the God of Israel shall put to rout His adversaries and the Christ of the Cross shall be the Christ of the Crown! We shall one day hear it saidThe great Shepherd reigns and His unsuffering kingdom now has come. Then rocks and hills and vales and islands of the sea shall all be vocal with the one song, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honor and glory and power and dominion and might forever and ever! Thus I have tried to draw the parallel, but I pray you to see the Lord Jesus for yourself and know whether I have spoken the truth about Him. You have heard the report. Now, like the queen of Sheba, go and see for yourself! Get to Christ! As to His dominioncome under His sway and acknowledge His scepter! Go and trust your King! Love your King! Praise your King! Delight in your King! How courtiers delight to be summoned to court! How glad they are to see the queens face. How pleased they are if she gives them but a kindly word! Surely, their fortune is made, or at least their hopes are raised and their spirits lifted up. Shall we not sun ourselves in the Presence of the blessed and only Potentate? Let us come into the Presence of our King tonight, or else let us sit here and weep! Let us come to His table to feed upon Him. Let us live on His Word. Let us delight in His love and we shall surely say, A greater than Solomon is here. II. I shall not detain you longer than a minute or two while I remark that we must rise beyond all parallels if we would reach the height of this great argument, for BETWEEN CHRIST AND SOLOMON THERE IS MUCH MORE CONTRAST THAN COMPARISONmuch more difference than likeness. In His Nature, the Lord Jesus is greater than Solomon. Alas, poor Solomon! The strongest man that ever lived, namely Samson, was the weakest of menand the wisest man that ever lived was, perhaps, the greatestcertainly the most conspicuousfool! How different is our Lord! There is no infirmity in Christ, no folly in the Incarnate God. The backsliding of Solomon finds no parallel in Jesus, in whom the prince of this world found nothing, though he searched Him through and through. Our Lord is greater than Solomon because He is not mere man. He is Man, perfect Man, Man to the utmost of manhood, sin excepted! But still, He is more and infinitely more, than man. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He is God, Himself. The Word was God. God dwells in Him and He, Himself, is God! As in Nature He was infinitely superior to Solomon and not to be compared with him for a moment, so was He in Character. Look at Christ and Solomon for a minute as to real greatness of character and you can hardly see Solomon with a microscopewhile Christ rises grandly before you, growing every moment till He fills the whole horizon of your admiration!   
Principally let me note the point of self-sacrifice. Jesus lived entirely for other people. He had never a thought about Himself. Solomon was, to a great extent, wise unto himself, rich unto himself, strong unto himself and you see in those great palaces and in all their arrangements that he seeks his own pleasure, honor and emolument. And, alas, that seeking of pleasure leads him into sin and that sin into a still greater one! Solomon, wonderful as he is, only compels you to admire him for his greatness, but you cannot admire him for his goodness. You see nothing that makes you love himyou rather tremble before him than feel gladdened by him. Oh, but look at Christ! He does not have a thought for Himself. He lives for others! How grandly magnificent He is in disinterested love. He loved His Church and gave Himself for it. He pours out His hearts blood for the good of men and, therefore, dear Friends, at this moment our blessed Lord is infinitely superior to Solomon in His influence. Solomon has little or no influence today. Even in his own time he never commanded the influence that Christ had in His deepest humiliation! I do not hear of any that were willing to die for Solomoncertainly nobody would do so now. But how perpetually is enthusiasm kindled in ten thousand breasts for Christ! They say that if there were stakes again in Smithfield we should not find men to burn on them for Christ. I tell you, it is not so! The Lord Jesus Christ has, at this moment, a remnant according to the election of His Grace who would fling themselves into a pit of fire for Himand rejoice to do it!   
Who shall separate useven us poor pigmiesfrom the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? Oh, says one, I do not think I could suffer martyrdom! You are not yet called to do so, my Brother, and God does not give you strength to do it before the need arises. But you will have strength enough if ever it comes your lot to die for Jesus. Did you hear of the martyr who, the night before he was to be burnt, sat opposite the fire and, taking his shoes off, he held his feet close to the flame till he began to feel the burning of them? He drew them back and said, I see God does not give me power to bear such suffering as I put upon myself, but I have, none the less, no doubt, he said, that I shall very well stand the stake tomorrow morning and burn quick to the death for Christ without starting back. And so he did, for he was noticed never to stir at all while the flames were consuming him.   
There is a great deal of difference between your strength, today, and what your strength would be if you were called to some tremendous work or suffering. My Lord and Master, let me tell you, wakes more enthusiasm in human breasts at this moment than any other name in the universe! Napoleon once said, I founded a kingdom upon force and it will pass away. But Christ founded a kingdom upon love and it will last forever and ever. And so it will. Blot out the name of Christ from the hearts of His people? Strike the sun from the firmament and quench the stars! And when you have achieved that easy task, yet have you not begun to remove the Glory of the indwelling Christ from the hearts of His people! Some of us delight to think that we bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Where? asks one. I answer, it is all over us. We have been buried into His name and we belong to Him in spirit, soul and body. That watermark which denotes that we are His can never be taken out of us! We are dead with Him, wherein we were buried with Him and are risen again with Him! And there is nothing at this moment that stirs our soul like the name of Jesus. Speak for yourselves! Is it not so? Have you never heard of one who lay dying, his mind wandering and his wife said to him, My Dear, do you not know me? He shook his head and they brought near his favorite child. Do you not know me? He shook his head. One whispered, Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? and he said, He is all my salvation and all my desire.

Oh, blessed name! Blessed name! Some years ago I was away from this place for a little rest and I was thinking to myself, Now I wonder whether I really respond to the power of the Gospel as I should like to do? I will go and hear a sermon and see. I would like to sit down with you in the pews, sometimes, and hear somebody else preachnot everybody, mark you for when I hear a good many, I want to be doing it myself. I get tired of them if they do not glow and burn. But that morning I thought I would drop into a place of worship such as there might be in the little town. A poor, plain man, a countryman, began preaching about Jesus Christ. He praised my Master in very humble language, but he praised Him most sincerely. Oh, and the tears began to flow. I soon laid the dust all round me where I sat and I thought, Bless the Lord! I do love Him! It only needs somebody else to play the harp instead of me and my soul is ready to dance to the heavenly tune! Only let the music be Christs sweet, dear, precious name and my heart leaps at the sound! Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, sound out the praises of Jesus Christ! Sound out that precious name! There is none like it under Heaven to stir my heart! I hope you can all say the same. I know you can if you love Him, for all renewed hearts are enamored of the sweet Lord Jesus. A greater than Solomon is here. Solomon has no power over your hearts, but Jesus has. His influence is infinitely greater. His power to bless is infinitely greater and so let us magnify and adore Him with all our hearts.   
Oh, that all loved Him! Alas that so many do not! What strange monsters! Why, if you do not love Christ, what are you? You hearts of stone, will you not break? If His dying love does not break them, what will? If you cannot see the beauties of Jesus, what can you see? You blind bats! O you that know not the music of His name, you are deaf! O you that do not rejoice in Him, you are dead! What are you, that you are spared through the pleading of His love and yet do not love Him? God have mercy upon you and bring you to delight yourselves in Christ and trust Him!  
As for us who do trust Him, we mean to love Him and delight in Him more and more, world without end. Amen.

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THE EYE AND THE LIGHT   
NO. 2109

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 13, 1889, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**No man, when he has lighted a candle, puts it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.**

**The light of the body is the eye: therefore when your eye is single, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is evil, your body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in you is not darkness. If your whole body therefore is full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle does give you light.   
Luke 11:33-36.**

IN this parable, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Light. Some saw His brightness, and were even dazzled by it, as was that woman who cried, Blessed is the womb that bore You and the paps which You have sucked. The malicious saw not His light but even dared to impute His miracles to the Prince of Darkness. Others professed to see so little light in Him that they demanded a sign from Heaven. Our Lords constant answer was to go shining on.

He was meant to be observed, even as a lamp is intended to be seen. A lamp is not lighted to be placed in a cellar, nor to be hidden under a bushelthe lamp is lighted on purpose, that all who come into the house may see the light. Even so, our Lord Jesus Christ could not be hid. In the narrow circle of the Holy Land, He shone so clearly that Gentiles came to the brightness of His rising. Yet, to make Him seen to the ends of the earth, He must be set on the lamp stand.

He was lifted up by crucifixion. And soon after He was raised by resurrectionHe was lifted up from earth to Heaven at His ascension and in another sense He was set on high by the descent of the Holy Spirit and the widespread ministry of His servants. Our Lord was thus taken from under the bushel of the obscurity which attached to His humble origin, brought away from the dark cellar of the despised Jewish nation, and set out in the open, where Greek and Roman, Barbarian and Scythian, might rejoice in His light. It is our duty to keep His name and His Truth ever before the world, waiting for the time when every eye shall see Him on the throne of His Glory.

Our Lord would have all men behold the light of His Gospel. For the text says, that they which come in may see the light. Whosoever comes into the Church, or even into the world, should be met with this lamp. For this Gospel is to be preached to every creature under Heaven. The mighty deeds of His salvation were not done in a cornerthey are for world-wide observation. He that has eyes to see let him see. If you do not see Jesus, it is not because He has hidden Himself in darkness but because your eyes are blinded.

The light which streams from the face of Jesus is meant for human eyesthe tempered brightness of the Mediators Glory suits those eyes, which are bid to look to Him and live. Light is not for the rich, the wise, the strongbut for men as men. The doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ are not meant to be the monopoly of a few learned doctors. They are the common inheritance of those who labor and are heavy laden. As the morning breaks for all weary, watching eyes, so shines the light of the glorious Gospel for all who sit in darkness and long for the light of God.

Beloved, the great thing to be desired is that the light which is so freely given forth by the Lord Jesus may become light within our souls. There He stands, as the lamp placed upon the lamp stand, conspicuous to all. But we need that the light outside in the room may become light inside, within the soul. Nothing more truly needs light than our inner man. We are, by nature, as a lantern with the candle blown out. Whether we will believe it or not, by nature we are in thick Egyptian night. Well says the Apostle, You were sometimes darkness.

Much is said about the light of conscience but in many this is but a glimmering taper whose beams are not light but darkness visible. The light of nature is dimmed by so many surroundings, and has so little oil to sustain it, that it leads no man to eternal life, unless there is added to it light from Abovethe light of Divine Grace, the clear shining of the Holy Spirit.

Light is absolutely essential to spiritual life. Ignorance is not the mother of devotion but of superstition. Knowledge, Divine Grace, the Truths of God, are the nurses of true faith. The light of God is needful to the life of God. We must know Christ, we must be illuminated by His Holy Spirit, we must have fellowship with the Fathers Truthor else we are deadas well as dark. Light within we must have, or the light outside will not benefit us.

Upon that subject we will speak at this time. May God grant us the light of His Spirit, for it would be idle for us to try to explain the action of light while ourselves in darkness. Shine within, O Holy Spirit, that we speak not of theory but of actual experience!

First, we will consider how the light entersThe light of the body is the eye: therefore when your eye is single, your whole body also is full of light. Secondly, we shall note how this light may be pervertedWhen your eye is evil, your body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in you is not darkness. In conclusion, we shall observe how the light acts withinIf your whole body therefore is full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle does give you light.

I. First, then, consider HOW THE LIGHT ENTERS THE SOUL. Into the body the light enters through the eye. A man without an eye might as well be without the sun, so far as light is concerned. The eye is as needed as the lamp, if a man is to see. The most brilliant light that ever has been invented, or ever can be discovered, will be of no use to the person who has no eye.   
Therefore it is true, The light of the body is the eye. It is most important to attend to that which is the eye of the inner man. For in vain does Christ Himself shine if His light cannot enter our souls. The condition of the eye of the mind is of the utmost importanceour light or our darkness will depend upon it. The eye of the soul may be viewed as the understanding, the conscience, the motive, or the heart. It would not be possible to confine it to any one of these names. I venture to call it, the intent of the mind.

Or, if you will, the aim of the heart, the honesty of the understanding. When God has given a man a true intent to see the light of the Gospel, He has in that honest intent furnished him with an eye for the heavenly light. If the Holy Spirit makes us truly willing to know the Truth of God, He has cleared the mental eye. The worst of it is that men have no will to see the light of Godtheir foolish heart is darkened, and therefore they do not understand, but altogether misrepresent the doctrine of the Lord Jesus.

The battle of Divine Grace is with mans unwillingness to see those Truths of God against which he is naturally at enmity. If a man wills to see the honest Truth and submits himself to the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, he will not be left in darkness. When a man does not want to see, he cannot seewhen he is determined not to learn, when Truth is unpalatable to him, when he designedly twists it from its meaning, then his eye is diseased and the light is hindered from its due effect.

Many things darken the eye of the soul. One of the most common is prejudice. The man conceives that he already has light. His father, his grandfather, his great-grandfather and previous generationswere brought up in a certain religionand therefore it must be right. Whether the lamp gives light or not, is not the questionit is the

family lampand he will have no other. He will not enquirehe is quite sure and wants no evidence.

When the light of God comes to him, he at once repels it. He cannot be disturbed, and therefore he will not hear, nor read, nor consider the matterhe is satisfied to let things be as they are. The very supposition that he may be wrong he regards as an insultmaliciously invented by an uncharitable mind. What is to be done with one so blinded? Are there not many such?

Sloth, too, is a great blinder of the eyeit draws down the eyelid and shuts out the light by the spirit of slumber. The man does not care what the Gospel is, or is not. Like Pilate, he asks, What is truth? but he never waits for an answer. It is too much trouble to some people to think, to search the Scriptures, and to pray. They have no heart for a process so troublesome. No, says the worldling, I have other fish to fry. I go my way to my farm and to my merchandise. Let graceless bigots fight about creeds and the like. It matters not one jot what a man believes. Thus do many abide in the blackest darkness, because it is too much trouble to open the shutters and draw up the blinds. Ah me, how dark are they who prefer an indolent ease to the light of God!

The light is often shut out by gross error. I cannot go over the list of the favorite errors of the present hour. For that list has grown too long for one days reading. Speciously taught in selected phrases, cunningly sup

ported by a dreamy science and adorned with certain great names, errors come to us nowadays as respectable forms of thought. Falsehoods of which we heard when we were childrenbut only heard of them as loathsome heresieslong ago decayed and thrown into the limbo of worthless and mischievous imaginationsare now refashioned, freshened up with touches of bright color and brought out as advanced ideas.

When any of these are permitted to occupy the mind, as they so commonly do nowadays, the old Gospel is no longer seen, because the eye is inflamed by the incoming of a foreign and irritating substance. Can it be that what was true a hundred years ago, is not true now? Can it be that the Gospel, which saved souls in the days of the Apostles, cannot save souls now? Is it so, that some men are wiser than God and are qualified to sit in judgment upon Prophets and Apostles? Surely, judicial blindness has   
happened to this generationthe chaff of their own folly has darkened their eyes and Christ is hid from them.

One thing darkens the eye more than any other, and that is the love of sin. Nine times out of ten, allowed sin is the cataract which darkens the mental eye. Men cannot see the Truth of God because they love falsehood. The Gospel is not seen because it is too pure for their loose lives and lewd thoughts. Christs holy example is too severe for the worldly. His Spirit is too pure for lovers of carnal pleasure. When people reject the doctrines of the Gospel, they also tolerate laxity of morals and give predominance to the customs of the world. How can men see, when sin has pricked the very eyeballs of the mind!

How can you believe, said Christ, which receive honor one of another? The love of worldly honor prevented the Pharisees from believing in the lowly Messiah. When sin, like a handful of mud, seals up the eye, you need not wonder that the man becomes an agnostic, a doubter, a caviler. To have a clear eye one must have a clean heart. The pure in heart shall see God. And therefore the pure in heart see Gods Truth, so as to appreciate it and delight in it. Oh, that the Spirit of God may wash the filth out of our eyes, that we may walk in the light, as God is in the light.

Pride, too, is a great darkener of the souls eye. When a man admires himself he never adores God. He that is taken up with the conceit of his own righteousness will never see the righteousness of Christ. If you believe yourself to be pure, you will never prize the blood which cleanses from all sin. If you believe yourself to be already perfect, you will not prize the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier. No man cries for Divine Grace till he perceives his own need of itif, therefore, we are puffed up with the notion that we   
are rich and increased in goods, we shall never see the riches of Grace which are treasured up in Christ Jesus. The light of God dwells not with human self-sufficiency. A mans own shadow is very often the means of keeping him in the dark.

Self-seeking, in every form, is a sad cause of obscuring the light of the soul. Self-seeking, in the grosser form of avarice, makes men grope in the daytime. The glitter of gold is injurious to the eye. How could Judas see the beauty of Christ when he saw such value in the thirty pieces of silver? How can a man set store by a future Heaven when a present fortune is Heaven enough for him? Mammon repays its worshippers with blind eyes.

Self does the same when it appears as ambition, desire of honor, and respect, or a wish to have a finger in ones own salvation. The proud desire to share the glory of our salvation with Free Grace prevents the entrance of the light of God. Self, in the form of magnifying the nobility of human nature, extolling the grandeur of our common humanity and all that, is a very blinding thing. How can a man that has his eye upon self have any sight for Jesus? Of all antichrists, self is the hardest to overcome.

It is written, He must increase but I must decrease. But if proud self will not endure a decrease, how can I see Christ increasing? There is no room for Him in my heart. Appreciation of self leads to depreciation of the Lord Jesus.

Multitudes are kept in darkness through fear of men. They dare not see. They feel bound to think as the fashion goesand there is a fashion of opinions as well as of coats and bonnets. If you resolve to hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints, you will be regarded as antiquated and you will be as much pointed out for your faith, as you would be for your dress if you should walk down the street in the costume of the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

To many it would be great sin to be singular. They never think for themselves. In fact, they are mentally shiftless. They ask their way of a certain person supposed to be a deeper student than themselvesof him they enquire what they ought to believe, disbelieve, praise, or blame. I remember well a man who never knew whether he liked a sermon till he had asked a certain knowing old gentleman whether it was a good one or not he had no home-grown judgmenthe imported his ideas. His brains, for safe keeping, were placed in another persons headthis is a very convenient thing and saves a good deal of headache.

But it has its drawbacks. Some persons put all their thinking out and have it done for them by the dozenbut he that would have Gods light knows that it comes not to the coward who fears the frown of a mortal and makes man his god. God could have given to the crowd a common judgment and have left us to be guided by a central authority, if He had thought it right to do so. But having given to each individual an understanding, He expects us to use it and to an honest personal use of understanding He gives the light.

The eye of the sparrow or of the ant may be very small, yet it sees the great light, if it is a single and clear eye. Pray, then, for Divine Grace, that you may search out for yourselves the Truth of God, free from the fear of man which brings a snare. Let us never enquire, Have any of the rulers believed? Whether the rulers have or have not believed, let us follow the Lamb wherever He goes and rejoice in that pure light which flows from Him.

God save you, dear Friends, from having your eye injured by any of the mischiefs I have mentioned. There are legions more of these blinding thingsmay Divine Grace guard you from them! God give you a single eye, by which is meant an eye which does not look at two things at a timea mind which is free from sinister motives and from anything which would cause you to choose falsehood rather than the Truth of God and wrong rather than right.

God grant that we may have a desire to be right, a resolute design to know the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, and to feel and act in sincere conformity to it! Oh, to be sincere, simple-hearted, child-like and true! We want neither great genius nor sparkling witwe need an unsophisticated mindfor so the light gets entrance into the soul through the Spirit of God.

II. Secondly, let us consider HOW THE LIGHT MAY BE PERVERTED. Some men might have light enough but their eye is in such an evil condition that the light is turned into darkness. I suppose that in the natural world light could not actually become darkness. But in the spiritual kingdom it is certainly soWhen your eye is evil, your body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in you be not darkness. Hearken, my Brothers and Sisters and take heed.

A man has heard the Gospel of Free Grace and dying lovehe has heard a message full of love concerning the forgiveness of sin and pardon bought with blood and freely given to him that believes. The doctrine of justification by faith has been clearly explained to him. He believes firmly in these great evangelical Truths and calls them glorious and precious. But he draws an inference from this teaching which is ruinous to his soul. He considers that, after all, sin is of small consequence and he may indulge in it freely, for God is merciful and Divine Grace is infinite.

At some time or other he will repent and believe in Jesus and then he will be set right, however grossly he may have offended. God is gracious, and therefore, he may be sinfulGod freely forgivesand therefore he may recklessly offend. This is to turn light into darkness. Such turning of the Grace of God into lasciviousness is infamous. Words cannot set forth the hideous ingratitude of such depraved arguments. We may justly say of a man who thus turns light into darkness, his damnation is just.

Yet no doubt there are many such who silently, in their own hearts, draw from the goodness of God a license to sin. Ah, my Hearer! If your eye is in this condition, the more freely we preach to you the Gospel of the Grace of God, the more surely will you go from sin to sin. This is terrible. O false Hearts! What shall I do with you? You make me wish to be dumb, lest I minister to your condemnation.

In the lowest Hell you are digging for yourselves a deeper Hellyou use the promises of mercy as the instruments of your own destruction. What? Can you hang yourselves nowhere but on the Cross? Can you drown yourselves nowhere but in the waters of Siloah? What has come to you, that you are so infatuated as to find your death in the Gospel which is ordained for life?

Let me set before you another form of this evil. A man perceives the great value of the means of Divine Grace, but he goes further and misuses them. Having been brought up religiously, he has a deep respect for the ministers of Gods House, for the services of the sanctuary, and especially for the two ordinances which Christ has established in His Church Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. He reverences the Sabbath, and the inspired Word, and the Church and all its sacred ministries. But it may be that he proceeds from a due regard of these things to a superstitious trust in them, making of them what God has never made of themthus his light becomes darkness.

He regards attendance upon public worship as a substitute for inward religion. He looks upon membership with a Church as a certificate of salvation. He may be so foolish as to speak of Baptism as an ordinance whereby he was made a member of Christ and a child of God. And of the Supper of the Lord as a saving ordinance, or even as a sacrifice for the quick and dead. When instructive symbols are perverted into instruments of priest-craft, the light is turned into darkness. By multitudes, in these days, aids to faith are degraded into the machinery of superstition.

The Church, which is our mother and nurse, is made into an antichrist and men look to her for salvation instead of looking wholly and alone to the Lord Jesus Christ. Outward modes of worship and instruction may be very beneficial, but if they are allowed to usurp the confidence of the soul, they may gender disease and death. When a mans religion becomes his destruction, how sure is that destruction!

I have known many go another waythey have said, I care very little about the shape or form of religion. A sincere spirit is everything. The letter kills, the spirit gives life. Such a man professes to clutch at the soul of things but I have seen him grow indifferent in creed and licentious in life. He believes everything to have some measure of truth in itevery evil practice to have some good point about it. This is a poisonous atmosphere for any man to breathe. Hear him talk, if you would see how the worse can be made to seem the better. Nothing to him is fixed truth, nor even settled right.

He is like the chameleon, which takes its color from the changing light about it. This he calls liberty. But assuredly it is not the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. Say, rather, it is the light of charity turned into the darkness of indifference. How great is this darkness! How many are deceived by it! After all, there is light and there is darknessand they are not the same thing. There is Truth, taught of God and there is a lie, which is the devils own. And these will never sit at the same table. There is a blessing for the preacher of the Truth of God. But if any man preaches another Gospel, for him there is an anathema which none can reverse.

I have also seen this light turned to darkness in the case of the student who has gathered great erudition and enrolled himself among the learned. He begins to criticize. Do not condemn him for thathe judges very properly at firsthe criticizes things that ought to be criticized. But he stops not there. Once having his critical faculty aroused, he is like a boy with a new knife. He must cut something or other. Nothing comes in his way

more often than the Scriptures. And he must have a cut at them. He whittles at Genesis. He makes a gash in Deuteronomy. He halves Isaiah.

He takes slices out of the Gospels and cuts the Epistles into slivers. You see, he has so sharp a knife that he must use it. By-and-by, from a critic he advances to an irreverent fault-finderand from that to an utter unbelieverhard in the mouth and stiff in the neck. His light has blinded him. He has taken his own   
eye to pieces that he might study its anatomy, and from now on the light will be of no more use to him than to the dead.

We have seen the light turned to darkness in a further sense. Hear and understand. There is a blessed light called the full assurance of faiththe more we have of it the better. Blessed is that man who never doubts his God, who hangs with holy confidence upon the eternal promises and the immutable Covenant and is never staggered through unbelief. He walks in the light of God and enjoys Divine fellowship.

But I have seen something very like to this holy confidence which has been before the Lord a very different matter. Assurance has been counterfeited by presumption. The man has taken for granted that he is a child of God when he is notand he has appropriated privileges which are none of his. He has supposed himself to be in the Covenant when he has neither part nor lot. And without repentance, without the new birthand without saving faithhe has dared to boast of those sacred securities which belong only to the heirs of Grace, sanctified in Christ Jesus. Dreadful is the case of the man who has presumed to hope for Heaven while living an ungodly lifeboasting of freedom from all fear, when, indeedhe was destitute of all hope.

I have also seen the light turned to darkness in quite another manner. Sweet and soft is the light of holy fearit is as the twilight of the evening. It is a light that comes from Godwhen a man is afraid to sinwhen he fears lest he should grieve the Spirit of God. He trembles lest in anything he should err from the teaching of his heavenly Father. But then this light may be corrupted into slavish dread, despondency and despair.

Introspection, or looking within, may degenerate into a morbid habit under its influence, the soul may refuse to look to Christand may enshroud itself in the gloom of remorse. The Truth of God may be distorted till it takes a most alarming shape and the soul, in sullen despair, refuses to be comforted, refuses to believe in the Son of God.

Do you wonder that our Lord seemed to hold up His hands in astonishment as He said, If the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! If that which should lead misleads, how misled you will be! If your better part turns out to be evil, how evil must you be! See to it then, dear Friends, as before the living God, that you have a clear eye and that the light of Christ comes streaming into your soul in all its glorious purity and power.

III. I close by coming to the third and most important pointHow THE LIGHT ACTS WHEN IT COMES WITHIN. If the eye is right, single and clear, there is no laborious work for that eye to do to obtain the light. When the sun is shining, if you wish for light, you simply open your eyes and you have light at once. You have not to rub the eye, or work it into some singular positionlet the outward light come to the eye and at once it enters it and conveys an image to the mind.

When the eye is sound, it takes pleasure in the light and with delight conveys the image of things external to the mind within. If the Lord, in His great Grace, has made your eye single, so that you desire only to know the Truth of God and to be yourself truethen without toil you will perceive Truth and the image thereof will readily appear before your mind. The light is willing enough to enter when the window of the soul allows its admission. When that light comes in, you will know it.

No man passes from his natural darkness into heavenly light without being aware that a great change has taken place. Beloved, I will try to show you how the holy light acts when it enters our nature. When it first comes in, it reveals much that was before unperceived. If a room has been long shut up and kept in darkness, the light has a startling effect. You may have hurried through that room with a candle but you never stayed to look, and therefore did not notice the state of things.

The room did not strike you as being very unpleasant, though it smelt a little stale and musty. But now that you have put back the shutters and drawn up the blind, the light has made the mold and dust very manifest. That black festoon of spiders websthose insects which hurry out of the light. That all-encrusting dustthese had been overlooked. The room cannot be suffered to remain in such a state. What a change is demanded! All hands are summoned to clean out the den and turn it into a healthy chamber fit to be inhabited.

The light of Heaven reveals a thousand sins and causes their removal. The first effect of the light of God in the soul is painfully unpleasantit makes you loathe yourself and almost wish that you had never been born. Things grow worse and worse to our consciousness as the light shines more and more. Beloved, we wish it to be so. We would have no part kept in the dark. We would have every idol discovered and broken, every secret chamber of imagery exposed to the sun and then destroyed.

Is it not so? Do you wish to keep the light from any part of your nature? Do you not far rather desire that the light should search you through and through and lay bare all the deceitfulness of your heart and all the falseness of your depraved mind?

As that light continues to enter, it gradually illuminates each faculty of the mind. The will by nature prefers the darknessthe man claims the right to act as he pleases and to give no reasons for his waywardness. When the light of God enters the soul, the Lord Jesus becomes altogether lovely, and then the sacred light falls on the proud will and the man sees that it is evil and perverse and he cries, O Lord Jesus, not my will but Yours, be done. This same light falls on the outward life which is ruled by the will, and the conduct and conversation become bright with the light of love. The judgment feels the inner illumination and decides according to the Law of truth and righteousness. With the judgment, the delight is lit up, also, and the heart rejoices in the Law of the Lord.

The light is poured in upon the conscience and now that poor, halfblinded thing issues edicts and gives forth verdicts which are according to the oracles of God. What a difference between a natural conscience and a conscience instructed by God and enlightened by His Word! There remains much more to be done in this direction than many of us suspect. We may be living unconsciously in evils for which our consciences have never once accused us. Godly men, in old times, persecuted those who differed from them and thought it a duty to do sothey even called toleration a crime.

The best of men owned Negro slaves and were not conscious of wrong. When Mr. Whitefield left certain Negroes to the Orphan House, he did not dream that he was violating the rights of manin fact, he was very careful for their present and future welfare. Conscience does not tolerate slavery now. Do you not think that a great enlightenment has taken place upon the slave question? Is not similar light needed as to war, as to wagepaying and wage-earning and a thousand other things? It is a happy thing that we have received a light which will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

There is nothing hid within us which this light will not manifest. And so, as one by one, we see our imperfections, we shall cry for Divine Grace to remove themand thus we shall grow in holiness through the Grace of God. This same light, falling on the memory, awakens penitence for our faults and gratitude for Gods goodness. Shining on our thoughts, it makes them sparkle with the beauty of holiness. Shining upon our emotions, it makes them flash and glow with love to God and heavenly things. A soul is a fine object when thus lit up!

The holy light falls on our motives and unveils the secret heart of all our actions. You do right, but this light shows you why you do right. You are a friend to man but why? You are a Christian professor but are you sincere? The light makes short work with that which did not flow from a pure motive. This light falls also on the spirit in which a deed was done. And here much is seen which some had rather not see.

Did you ever have the light of God brought to bear upon your imagination? Imagination is the playroom of the soul. Here many a man considers that he is without Law. Surely, he says, thought is free. The man gloats over sins which he would fear to commithe finds a pleasure in thinking over lusts which his circumstances compel him to avoid. In the dark chambers of imagination, the heart commits adulteries, murders, thefts and all manner of infamies.

When the light falls here, the man shudders as he learns that as he thinks in his heart, so he is. He trembles as he perceives that the fond imagination of sin is sin. Then is the floor of imagination purged and the foul dust and chaff are driven into the fire. Fancy then gleams in the light of God and imagination. Washed in the brazen layer, she sings songs on her stringed instruments unto the God of her salvation, who has brought her out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Brethren, we need the light to shine in upon our tempers. We know some Christian people who will not let you mention their tempersthey have taken out a license to be as surly as they likeon the ground of, it is their constitution. No, they say, I cannot help being passionate. My mother was a very quick-tempered woman and I am naturally in that way. Theres no help for it. Let the light in upon that unseemly thing. If what you say is true, write it down in black and white that you are an incorrigible vixenand must be so all your life.

What? Do you not like it? If it is true, let the light in upon it. Let it be known to your own self and to others that you are a mad dog and that there is no curing you. Are you angry with me for suggesting it? I am only taking you at your word. Do not say, I cannot help having a bad temper. Friend, you must help it. Pray God to help you to overcome it at once! For either you must kill it, or it will kill you.

You cannot carry a bad temper into Heaven. They will have none of your passions in the Fathers House above. Let in the light of Christs love on it, and the vile thing will be made to die. It is a night bird. It cannot bear the light of Divine Grace and love. Live near to Jesus and His compassion will destroy your evil passion. Try it.

Your desires, your hopes, your fears, your aspirations, should all be set in the lightand what a joy it will be when they all glitter in it! No part darkwhat a wonderful condition! Some professors appear to have a little light in the upper rooms. They have notions in their heads and ideas on their tongues! Alas, the first floor is dark, very dark. From their common conversation the light of God is absent. Enter at the door and you cannot see your way into the passage, or up the stairs. The light is up a loft but not in the dwelling rooms.

Oh, for light in the region of the heart! Oh, for light upon the household talk and the business conversation! From attic to cellar may the whole houses of our humanity be lighted up! This is the true work of Divine Grace, when the whole man is brought into the light and no part is left to pine in the darkness. Then are we the children of light, when we abide in the light and have no fellowship with darkness. Then is the distinction seen between Israel and Egypt. For while all Egypt sat in a darkness which might be felt, in the land of Goshen there was light.

Where this light comes it gives certaintywe cease to doubt and we know whom we have believed. With this comes directionwe see our way and how to walk in it. We pursue a plain path and are no more in a maze. This is the way, walk you in it, is sounded in our ears as the light reveals to us the narrow way which leads to eternal life.

This light, when it dwells in the heart, brings good cheer with it. Darkness is doleful, light brings delight. Did you ever travel by a train which passed through a tunnel but was destitute of a single lamp? Somebody has struck a match and lighted a candle and all eyes have turned towards him. In a small way he was a benefactorall eyes are glad of light. Oh, what a sweet thing is the light of the Holy Spirit to one that has been long in the darkness of ignorance, sorrow and despair!

A poor boy who was put down in the coal mine to close a door after the coal wagons had passed by, was forced to sit there all alone, hour after hour, in the dark. He was a gracious child. And when one said to him, Are you not weary with sitting so long in the dark? he said, Yes, I do

get tired. But sometimes the men give me a bit of candle and when I get a light I sing. So do we. When we get a light we sing. Glory be to God, He is our light and our salvation, and therefore we sing. O Child of God, when your eye is single and the light of God fills every part of your being, then you sing, and sing again, and feel that you can never have done with singing on earth, till you begin singing in Heaven!

The text has perplexed many a learned reader. And therefore you will not wonder that I confess that it has puzzled me many times. See what it saysIf your whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light. Is not this saying the same thing? The Holy Spirit would not use a tautology, nor utter a trite, self-evident thing. Yet we must not go beyond what the text says. It seems to me that our Lord wished us to feel that He could say nothing better in praise of a soul in which there was no part dark than what He had said, namely, The whole shall be full of light.

Some have thought that He meant that being lighted within we shall be full of light to others. That is a great Truth of God. But our Lord does not say so here. For He compares our inward light to a candle which shines on ourselvesas when the bright shining of a candle does give you light. He refers to our own personal comfort. When a room is thoroughly welllighted in every corner, it has a joyous splendor. One looks about and feels content and satisfied. So, when the whole nature is filled with the light of God, we have sweetness and light to the full and Heaven seems begun below.

It is inexpressibly delightsome, luxuriously blessed, to dwell in the full light of God when there is no concealment and no love of evil. When once the sun thus shines full on me, I would cry with Joshua, Sun, stand still!

This inner light will make us shine before others. It is the only shining we should seek. A clean lantern with a lighted candle in it makes no noise and yet it wins attentionthe darker the night, the more it is valued. There never was a time in which true inner light was more needed than nowmay the Lord impart it to each one of usand then we shall shine as lights in the world! The Lord God bring this light to you and fill you with it. And unto His name shall be the glory!

You have not to work for the light, you have only to receive it. Then shall your profiting be known unto all men when it is true profiting to your own character. God bless you, for Christs sake! Amen.

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HYPOCRISY   
NO. 237

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 6, 1859, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**Beware you of the leaven of the   
Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.   
Luke 12:1.**

THIS age is full of shams. Pretence never stood in so eminent a position as it does at the present hour. There are few, I fear, who love the naked truthwe can scarcely endure it in our houses. You would scarcely trade with a man who absolutely stated it. If you walked through the streets of London, you might imagine that all the shops were built of marble and that all the doors were made of mahogany and woods of the rarest kinds. And yet you soon discover that there is scarce a piece of any of these precious fabrics to be found anywhere, but that everything is grained and painted and varnished. I find no fault with this, except as it is an outward type of an inward evil that exists. As it is in our streets, so is it everywheregraining, painting and gilding, are at an enormous premium. Counterfeit has at length attained to such an eminence that it is with the utmost difficulty that you can detect it.

The counterfeit so near approaches to the genuine, that the eye of Wisdom herself needs to be enlightened before she can discern the difference. Specially is this the case in religious matters. There was once an age of intolerant bigotry, when every man was weighed in the balance and if he was not precisely up to the orthodox standard of the day, the fire devoured him. But in this age of charity and of most proper charity, we are very apt to allow the counterfeit to pass current and to imagine that outward show is really as beneficial as inward reality. If ever there was a time when it was needful to say, Beware you of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, it is now.

The minister may cease to preach this doctrine in the days of persecutionwhen the fire wood is blazing and when the rack is in full operationfew men will be hypocrites. These are the keen detectors of imposturessuffering and pain and death, for Christs sakeare not to be endured by mere pretenders. But in this silken age, when to be religious is to be respectable, when to follow Christ is to be honored and when godliness, itself, has become gain, it is doubly necessary that the minister should cry aloud and lift up his voice like a trumpet against this sin, the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

I am sure that every true child of God will stand at times in doubt of himself and his fear will probably take the shape of a suspicion concerning his own state

*He that never doubted of his state,   
He mayperhaps he maytoo late.*   
The Christian, however, does not belong to that class. He will at times begin to be terribly alarmed, lest, after all, his godliness should be but seeming and his profession an empty vanity. He who is true will sometimes suspect himself of falsehood, while he who is false will wrap himself up in a constant confidence of his own sincerity.

My dear Christian Brothers and Sisters, if you are at this time in doubt concerning yourselves, the Truth of God I utter will, perhaps, help you in searching your own heart and trying your own reins. I am sure you will not blame me if I should seem to be severe, but you will rather say, Sir, I desire to make sure work concerning my own soul. Tell me faithfully and tell me honestly what are the signs of a hypocrite and I will sit down and try to read my own heart, to discover whether these things have a bearing upon me. Happy shall I am if I shall come out of the fire like pure gold.

We shall note, then, this morning, first, the character of a hypocrite. Then we shall try to cast up his accounts for him, with regard to his loss or gain. And then we shall offer a cure for hypocrisy, which, if constantly carried about with us, will certainly prevent us from attempting to deceive. The cure is contained in these words which follow the textFor there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever you have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light. And that which you have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

I. First, THE HYPOCRITES CHARACTER. We have an elaborate description of the hypocrite in the chapter we have just read, the twentythird of Matthew, and I do not know that I can better portray him than by turning again to the words of Christ.

A hypocrite may be known by the fact that his speech and his actions are contrary to one another. As Jesus says, they say and they do not. The hypocrite can speak like an angel and quote texts with the greatest rapidity. He can talk concerning all matters of religion, whether they are theological doctrines, metaphysical questions, or experimental difficulties. In his own esteem he knows much and when he rises to speak, you will often feel abashed at your own ignorance in the presence of his superior knowledge. But see him when he comes to actions. What behold you there? The fullest contradiction of everything that he has uttered. He tells others that they must obey the Lawdoes he obey it? Ah, no. He declares that others must experience this, that, and the other, and he sets up a fine scale of experience, far above even that of the Christian himself. But does he touch it? No, not with so much as one of his fingers.

He will tell others what they should do. But will he remember his own teaching? Not he! Follow him to his house. Trace him to the market, see him in the shop and if you want to refute his preaching you may easily do it from his own life. My Hearer! Is this your case? You are a member of a Church, a deacon, a minister. Is this your case? Is your life a contradiction to your words? Do your hands witness against your lips? How stands it with you? With a blush, each one of us must confess that, to some extent, our life is contradictory to our profession. We blush and we mourn over this. But I hope there are some here who can say, Notwithstanding many infirmities, with my whole heart have I strived to run in the ways of Your commandments, O my God, and I have not intentionally spoken that with my lip which I did not intend to carry out in my life. Ah, believe me, my Hearers, talk is easy, but walk is hardspeech any man may attain unto, but act is difficult. We must have Grace within to make our life holy. But lip-piety needs no Grace. The first mark of a hypocrite, then, is, that he contradicts by his acts what he utters by his words. Do any of you do so? If so, stand convicted of hypocrisy and bow your heads and confess the sin.

The next mark of a hypocrite is that whenever he does right it is that he may be seen of men. The hypocrite sounds a trumpet before he gives his alms and chooses the corner of the streets for his prayers. To him virtue in the dark is almost a vicehe can never detect any beauty in virtue unless she has a thousand eyes to look upon her and then she is something, indeed! The true Christian, like the nightingale, sings in the night. But the hypocrite has all his songs in the day, when he can be seen and heard of men. To be well-spoken of is the very elixir of his life. If he is praised, it is like sweet wine to him. The censure of man upon a virtue would make him change his opinion concerning it in a moment. For his standard is the opinion of his fellow creatureshis law is the law of selfseeking and of self-honoring. He is virtuous, because to be virtuous is to be praised. But if tomorrow vice were at a premium he would be as vicious as the rest. Applause is what too many are seeking after. They eschew all secret religion and only live where men may behold them.

Now, is this our case? Let us deal honestly with ourselves. If we distribute to the poor, do we desire to do it in secret, when no tongue shall tell? Are our prayers offered in our closets, where God, who hears the cry of the secret ones, listens unto our supplication? Can we say that if every man were struck stone blind and deaf and dumb, we would not alter our conduct the least? Can we declare that the opinion of our fellows is not our guiding law, but that we stand servants to our God and to our conscience and are not to be made to do a wrong thing from flattery, nor are we urged to do a right thing from fear of censure?

Mark, the man who does not act rightly from a higher motive than that of being praised gives sore suspicion that he is a hypocrite. But he who will do a right thing against the opinion of every man and simply because he believes it to be right and sees the stamp of Gods approval upon it that man need not be afraid that he is a hypocrite. He would be a kind of hypocrite that one has never discovered as yet. Hypocrites do their good works for applause. Is it so with you? If so, be honest and as you would convict another convict yourself.

Againhypocrites love titles and honors and respect from men. The Pharisee was never so happy as when he was called Rabbi. He never felt himself so really great as when he was stuck up in the highest seat in the synagogue. Then he must be good, indeed. But the true Christian cares

not for titles. It is one of the marks of Christiansthat they have generally taken names of abuse to be their distinctive appellations. There was a time when the term Methodist was abusive. What did those good men say who had it so applied to them? You call us Methodists by way of abuse, do you? It shall be our title. The name Puritan was the lowest of all. It was the symbol which was always employed by the drunkard and swearer to express a godly man. Well, says the godly man, I will be called a Puritan. If that is a name of reproach I will take it. It has been so with the Christian all the world over. He has chosen for himself the name which his enemy has given him in malice.

Not so the hypocrite. He takes that which is the most honorable. He wishes always to be thought to belong to the most respectable sect and to hold an office in that sect which will confer upon him the most honorable title. Now, can you say from your inmost soul that in religion you are not seeking for honors or titles, but that you can tread these beneath your feet and want no higher degree than that of a sinner saved by grace and no greater honor than to sit at the feet of Jesus and to learn of Him? Are you willing to be the despised followers of the carpenters son, as were the fishermen upon the lake? If so, methinks you have but little hypocrisy in you. But if you only follow Him because you are honored by men, farewell to the sincerity of your religion, you are unmasked and stand before the face of this congregation an acknowledged hypocrite.

There was another evidence of an hypocrite which was equally good, namely, that he strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel. Hypocrites in these days do not find fault with us for eating with unwashed hands, but they still fix upon some ceremonial omission. Sabbatarianism has furnished hypocrisy with an extremely convenient refuge. Acts of necessity done by the Christian are the objects of the sanctimonious horror of Phariseesand labors of mercy and smiles of joy are damning sins in the esteem of hypocrites if done upon a Sunday. Though our Father worked up to now and Christ worked and though works of kindness and mercy and charity are the duty of the Sabbathyet if the Christian is employed in these, he is thought to be offending against Gods holy Law.

The slightest infringement of that which is a ceremonial observance becomes a great sin in the eye of the hypocrite. But he, poor man, who will find fault with you for some little thing in this respect, straining at a gnat, is the man you will find cheating, adulterating his goods, lying, puffing and grinding the poor. I have always noticed that those very particular souls who look out for little things, who are always searching out little points of difference, are just the men who omit the weightier matters of the law and while they are so particular about the tithe of mint and anise and cumminwhole loads of tithe-wheat are smuggled into their own barns. Always suspect yourself when you are more careful about little than about great things. If you find it hurts your conscience more to be absent from the communion than to cheat a widow, rest quite assured that you are wrong. The Thug, you know, thinks it a very proper thing to murder all he can. But if a little of the blood of his victims should stain his lips, then he goes off to the priest and says he has committed a great sin. The blood has been on his lipswhat must he do to get the sin forgiven?

And there are many people of the same class in England. If they should do anything on a Good Friday, or on Christmas Day, poor souls, it is awfully wicked!. But if they should be lazy all the six days of the week, it is no sin at all. Rest you assured that the man who strains at a gnat but yet so allows the camel, is a deceiver. Mark you, my dear Friends, I like you to strain at the gnats. I have no objection to that at allonly do not swallow the camel afterwards. Be as particular as you like about right and wrong. If you think a thing is a little wrong, it is wrong to you. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. If you cannot do it, believing yourself to be right in not doing it, though another man could do it and do right, yet to you it would not be right. Strain the gnats. They are not good things in your wines, strain them out. It is well to get rid of them. But then do not open your mouth and swallow a camel afterwards, for if you do that, you will give no evidence that you are a child of God, but prove that you are a damnable hypocrite.

But read on in this chapter and you will find that these people neglected all the inward part of religion and only observed the outward As our Savior said, they made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they were full of extortion and excess. There are many books which are excellently bound, but there is nothing within them. And there are many persons that have a very spiritual exterior, but there is nothing whatever in the heart. Do you not know some of them? Perhaps if you know yourself you may discover one. Do you not know some who are precisely religious who would scarce omit attending to a single means of grace, who practice the ritual in all its forms and all its ceremonies, who would not turn aside as much as a hairs breadth from any outward command?

Before the world they stand as eminently pious, because they are minutely attentive to the externals of the sanctuary. But yet they are careless of the inward matter. So long as they take the bread and wine they are not careful about whether they have eaten the flesh and drunk the blood of Christ. So long as they have been baptized with water they are not careful whether they have been buried with Christ in Baptism unto death. So long as they have been up to the House of God they are satisfied. It is nothing to them whether they have had communion with Christ, or not. No, they are perfectly content, so long as they have the shell, without looking for the kernel. The wheat may go where it pleasesthe husk and the chaff and the straw, are quite sufficient and enough for them.

Some people I know of are like inns, which have an angel hanging outside for a sign, but they have a devil within for a landlord. There are many men of that kind. They take good care to have an excellent sign hanging out, they must be known by all men to be strictly religious. But within, which is the all-important matter, they are full of wickedness. But I have sometimes heard persons mistake this matter. They say, Ah, well, poor

man, he is a sad drunkard, certainly, but he is a very good-hearted man at bottom. Now, as Rowland Hill used to say, that is a most astonishing thing for any man to say of another, that he was bad at top and good at bottom. When men take their fruit to market they cannot make their customers believe, if they see rotten apples at the top, that there are good ones at the bottom.

A mans outward conduct is generally a little better than his heart. Very few men sell better goods than they put in the window. Do not misunderstand me. When I say we must attend more to the inward than the outward, I would not have you leave the outward to itself. Make clean the outside of the cup and plattermake it as clean as you can, but take care also that the inward is made clean. Look to that first. Ask yourself such questions as theseHave I amen born again? Am I passed from darkness to light? Have I amen brought out of the realms of Satan into the kingdom of Gods dear Son? Do I live by private communion near to the side of Jesus? Can I say that my heart pants after the Lord, even as the hart does alter the water brooks? For if I cannot say this, whatever my outward life may be, I am self-deceived and deceive others and the woe of the hypocrite falls upon me. I have made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but the inward part is very wickedness.

Does that come home to any of you? Is this personal preaching? Then God be blessed for it. May the Truth of God be the death of your delusions. You may know a hypocrite by another sign. His religion depends upon the place, or upon the time of day. He rises at seven oclock, perhaps, and you will find him religious for a quarter of an hour. For he is, as the boy said, saying his prayers to himself in the first part of the morning. Well, then you find him pretty pious for another half-hour, for there is family prayer. But when the business begins and he is talking to his men, I wont guarantee that you will be able to admire him.

If one of his servants has been doing something a little amiss, you will find him perhaps using angry and unworthy language. You will find him, too, if he gets a customer whom he thinks to be rather green, not quite pious, for he will be taking him in. You will find, too, that if he sees a good chance at any hour of the day, he will be very ready to do a dirty trick. He was a saint in the morning, for there was nothing to be lost by itbut he has a religion that is not too strictbusiness is business, he says, and he puts religion aside by stretching his conscience, which is made of very elastic material. Well, sometime in the evening you will find him very pious again, unless he is out on a journey, where neither wife, nor family, nor Church can see him and you will find him at a theater. He would not go if there was a chance of the minister hearing of it, for then he would be excommunicated, but he does not mind going when the eye of the Church or of any of his friends is not upon him.

Fine clothes make fine gentlemen and fine places make fine hypocrites. But the man who is true to his God and to his conscience, is a Christian all day and all night long and a Christian everywhere. Though you were to fill my house full of silver and gold, he says, I would not do a dirty action. Though you should give me the stars and the countless wealth of empires, yet I would not do that which would dishonor God, or disgrace my profession. Put the true Christian where he might sin and by Gods grace, he will not do it. He does not hate sin for the sake of the company, but he hates it for its own sake. He says, How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?

You shall find him a fallible man, but not a false man. You shall find him full of infirmities, but not of intentional lust and of designed iniquity. As a Christian, you must follow Christ in the mire as well in the meads you must walk with Him in the rain as well as in the sunshineyou must go with Him in the storm as well as in fair weather. He is no Christian who cannot walk with Christ, come rags, come poverty, come contumely or shame. He is the hypocrite who can walk with Christ in silver slippers and leave Him when it becomes necessary for him to go barefoot. The hypocrites religion is like a chameleon, it takes its color from the light which falls upon it. But the Christians religion is evermore the same. Is this true then of any of us? Can we say we desire to be evermore the same? Or do we change with our company and with the times? If so, we are hypocrites confessed and let us own it before God and may God make us sincere.

There is another sign of the hypocrite and now the lash will fall on my own back and on most of us too. Hypocrites and other people besides hypocrites, are generally severe with others and very lenient with themselves. Have you ever heard a hypocrite describe himself? I describe him thusyou are a mean, beggarly fellow. No, says he, I am notI am economical. I say to him, You are dishonest, you are a thief. No, says he, I am only cute and sharp for the times. Well, but, I say to him, you are proud and conceited. Oh, he says, I have only a proper and manly respect. Yes, but you are a fawning, cringing fellow. No, he says, I am all things to all men. Somehow or other he will make vice look like a virtue in himself, but he will deal by the reverse rule with others.

Show him a Christian who is really humble and he says, I hate his fawning ways. Tell him there is one who is very courageous for Christ Oh, he is impudent, says he. Show him one who is liberal, doing what he can for his Masters service, spending and being spent for HimRash and imprudent, says he, extravagant. The man does not know what he is about. You may point out a virtue and the hypocrite shall at once say it is a vice. Have you ever seen a hypocrite turn doctor? He has a fine beam in his eye, large enough to shut out the light of Heaven from his soul, but nevertheless he is a very skillful oculist He waits upon some poor Brother, whose eye is a little affected with a mote so tiny that the full blaze of the sun can scarce reveal it. Look at our beam-eyed friend, he puts on a knowing look and cries, Allow me to extract this mote for you. You hypocrites! First cast out the beam out of your own eye and then shall you see clearly to cast out the mote out of your brothers eye. There are people of that sort who make virtues in others into vices and vices in

themselves they transform into virtues.

Now, if you are a Christian, I will tell you what will be your spiritit will be the very reverse. You will be always making excuses for others, but you will never be making excuses for yourself. The true Christian, if he sees himself sin, mourns over it and makes much ado concerning it. He says to another, Oh, I feel so sinful. And the other one cries I cannot really see it. I can see no sin in you. I could wish I were holy as you. No, says the other, but I am full of infirmity. John Bunyan describes Mercy and Christiana and the children, after having been washed in the bath and sealed with the seal, as coming up out of the water and being all fair and lovely to look upon. And one began to say to the other, You are fairer than I! and You are more comely than I! And then each began to bemoan their own spots and to praise the beauty of the others. That is the spirit of a Christian. But the spirit of the hypocrite is the very reverse. He will judge and condemn and punish with lynch-law every other man. And as for himself, he is exempt, he is a king, he knows no law and his conscience slumbers and allows him to go on easily in the very sins which he condemns in others. This is a very prominent mark of the hypocrite and I question whether all of us must not blame ourselves a little here.

II. And now we are going to CAST UP THE HYPOCRITES ACCOUNT FOR HIM. Now, Sir, bring us your ledger and let us have a look at it. You are a hypocrite. Well, what is on the profit side? A good deal, I must confess. Here is, first of all credit and honor. If you were to say outright, You are a thief, you are a private drunkard, you can curse God as well as any man, or if the world should hear as much, you would have no honor. But as it is you have joined the Church and the minister is very fond of you. The deacons and elders think a great deal of you and you are a very honorable, respectable man. You go walking up to your pew with your Bible and your hymn book and everybody says, There is an exemplary character. And they pat their little boys on the head and say, May you grow up to be a very good man like Mr. So-and-So.

The next advantage is the case which you enjoy. The minister often preaches a solemn, thundering sermon against sin. You get off all that. You are not a sinner, are you? Not at all. Who would suspect you? You are one of the brightest of the saints. It is almost a pity you were not one of the twelve. There was one among them almost as good as yourself and his end will probably be yours. You escape every thunder of the Law. Your conscience rests easy and the very thing which makes the child of God tremble, puffs you up and the very marks and evidences which cast him down, help to exalt you. The sun of the Gospel which melts wax, hardens the poor clay of your hearts and you get the more exalted in your selfconceit through everything you hear. And that is good, too, is it not? Very much in your favor, certainly.

And then there is another thing. How nicely your shop has prospered through it. That, perhaps, is the part of the bargain which you like the best. Ever since you have made a profession of religion, have not those who go to your Church and Chapel traded with you? You would not have got on half so well if you had been suspected to be what you really are. But because of that fine cloak of yours, that fine garment of hypocrisy, how nicely you have prospered! What a nice little round sum you have been able to lay by, have you not? All that is the bright side again. And besides that, what honors have you not received in the Church. Are not you made a deacon, or an elder? Yes, perhaps a minister, toohow pleasant that is! And you puff yourself up and you feel satisfied. Oh, what a good man am I, other people think I am, therefore I must be. It is true I devour the widows house. It is true I am not very particular about what I do. Nevertheless the minister, the elders, the deacons think me good, the whole Church applauds me. They cannot all be mistakensurely I must be a special saint. That is your profit side of the account, what about the other side? I think we shall be able to strike a balance that will not be much in your favor, Sir.

In the first place, I see a black item down here. Some of the people of the world do not think quite as much of you, as you imagine. The poor widow does not give you much of a character. You will have to be very careful, Sir, or your base deeds will come out. The very first item I see down here is a fear that your hypocrisy will be discovered. It would take you only half as much trouble to be an honest man as it does to be a deceiver. A man who is in the habit of speaking truth, need not mind how he opens his mouth, nor where. But a man who lies should be very careful and have a very good memory and remember all he has ever said before, lest he should trip himself. So it is with you, my Friend, your religion is a Sunday religion and you have to be very careful, so as to make Monday dealings hold their tongues and Sunday doings now as fond as they can. Hard work! I would not stand in your place to have all the trepidation and fear of discovery which so often comes upon you. No, I would sooner be a worldling, than I would have the fear that constantly haunts you, lest you should stand ashamed before the Church by your base iniquity being discovered.

But I see something worse than thishere is constant disquietude of consciencehypocrites may seem as if they were at ease but they cannot really be. The Christian who is true to God and is really His child, can sometimes say, I know that Jesus has taken away my sin. Assurance, vouchsafed to him by the Spirit, calms his fears and he can rest in Christ. But the highest presumption to which the hypocrite can attain, brings no such calm as that which is breathed upon the Christian by the lips of assurance. He can go to his bed, no, he can go to his tomb in peace, but the hypocrite is afraid of a shadow and flees when no man pursues.

And last of all, Mr. Hypocrite, I see an item here which you usually forgetit is thisthat in spite of your profession, God abhors you and if there is one man more than another who stinks in the nostrils of Jehovah, it is such as you areyou miserable pretender. There shall be a special place reserved for you among the damned. Think, man, what shall be your misery when your secret deeds of iniquity are read before an assembled universe and men and angels utter one unanimous hiss against you?

What shall it be when the mask is torn off youwhen the masquerade of your hypocrisy is done and you are stripped naked to your shame, to be observed of all and to be despised of all? What do you say to this? Shall you go from your deaconship, or from your ministry, to be among the devils in Hell? Shall you go from the sacramental table to drink the sulfur cup of torment? Shall you descend from the song of the sanctuary and from the House of God to the abode of fiends and to the wailing of the damned?

Yes, you shall as sure as this Word is true, if you go on in your hypocrisy. Death shall find you out and Hell shall be your doom, for the hope of the hypocrite is as the spiders web, soon swept away. And where is he when God takes away his hope?

This, then, is the casting up of the hypocrites account and there is a deficit of an infinite amount.   
III. Now for the matter of the CURE OF THE HYPOCRITE. What shall we say to it? Oh, my Friends, I feel that in thus speaking of the hypocrite, I have tried to speak severely, but I have not been able to reach the heart as I could wish. It is a mark of human nature that this is the last sin of which we really suspect ourselves and yet one into which it is most easy to fall. Often do I fall on my knees in an agony of doubt and cry, Lord, make me sincere. If I am deceived, undeceive me. I do not think that any Christian will live long without some such seasons of anguishing selfexamination. Let me put it to you today, let no one exempt himself. You may have been professing Christians for many years and yet you may have been hypocrites. Remember there was a hypocrite among the Apostles, so may there be among the ministers of Christ. There have been deceivers among the Apostolic Churcheshow much more may we expect them among us? Do not look around to find them out, it is Gods business not yours, to find out hypocrites. But look at yourselves to see whether you are one.   
Driving along the other day in the wind I observed a great branch fall just in front of me. I remarked that it was rotten and wondered within myself how long that might have been upon the tree and yet have been rotten after all? Then I thought, Oh, if the wind of persecution were to sweep through the Church, should I fall off like a rotten branch? Would not many of my Hearers fall off? They have been united to Christ professedly for a long time and have spoken for Him, perhaps preached for Him, but if the time of trial, which shall try the earth, should come upon us again, how many of us would stand?   
Oh, my Hearers do not be content to take your religion at second-hand. Let it not be a superficial work. Do not think that because you have seen me and have seen my elders and we have admitted you into the Church, you are therefore all right. We have been deceived many times. It is not hard work to deceive a kind heart. I have looked into the eyes of some and have tried to read their very soul and yet I have misjudged. I have seen tears in their eyes while they have made a profession of Christ and yet they have been deceivers after all and I have been very grossly taken in. In fact, the more kind-hearted a man is, the more will human nature endeavor to impose upon him. I am certain I have used the utmost diligence to weed out of my Church those whom I have suspected of hypocrisy and greater diligence shall yet be used.   
But, oh, do deal with yourselves, I beseech you. I will not send you to Hell blind-folded if I can help it. I do not wish to be in error myself and God forbid that I should suffer you to be deceived. Oh, if you are not true Christians, away with your profession altogether! If it is not sound work, down with it! Better see the house tumble now, than let it stand till the rain descends and the floods come and the winds beat upon it in the dread eternity of the future. Oh, no, I would rather send every heart home uncomfortable than let the hypocrite sit down at ease. I would rather wound the child of God than allow the hypocrite to escape.

But now for the cure of the hypocrite. What shall we do to cure ourselves of any hypocrisy that may exist among us? Let us remember that we cannot do anything in secret even if we try. The all-seeing God, apprehended in the conscience, must be the death of hypocrisy. I cannot try to deceive when I know that God is looking at me. It is impossible for me to play double and false when I believe that I am in the presence of the Most High and that He is reading my thoughts and the secret purposes of my heart. The only way in which the hypocrite can play the hypocrite at all is by forgetting the existence of God. Let us, therefore, remember it wherever I am, upon my bed or in my secret chamber, God is there. There is not a secret word I speak in the ear of a friend but God hears it.   
Do I seek out the most private part of the city for the commission of sinGod is there. Do I choose the shadow of night to cover my iniquity? He is there looking upon me. The thought of a present Deity, if it were fully realized, would preserve us from sin. He is always looking on me, ever regarding me. We think we are doing many things in secret, but there is nothing concealed from Him with whom we have to do. And the day is coming when all the sins that we have committed shall be read and published. Oh, what a blush shall crimson the cheek of the hypocrite when God shall read the secret diary of his iniquity! O my fellow Professors, let us always look upon our actions in the light of the great proclaiming of them in the Day of Judgment. Pause over everything you do and say, Can I bear to have this sounded with a trumpet in the ear of all men? No, take a higher motive and say, Can I endure to do this and yet to repeat the words, You, God see me ?   
You may deceive men and deceive yourselves, but God you cannot, God you shall not. You may die with the name of Christ upon your lips and men may bury you in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection, but God shall not be deceived neither by your profession nor by mens opinion. He shall put you in the scales and if you are found wanting, He shall cry, Away with him. He shall ring you and if you have not the ring of the pure coin of Grace, He shall nail you down forever as a counterfeit. He shall strip the mask off you. Virtue is most adorned when unadorned the most. To detect you, you shall be stripped naked and every cloak shall be torn to tatters. How will you endure this? Will you dig into the depths to hide yourselves? Will you plunge into the sea to find a way of escape? Will you cry for the rocks to hide you and the mountains to fall upon you? In vain shall you cry. The all-seeing God shall read your soul, shall discover your secret, shall reveal your hidden things and tell the world that, though you did eat and drink in his streets, though you preached His name, yet He never knew you, you were still a worker of iniquity and must be driven away forever.   
Come let us just for one second reflect that we shall soon lie upon our death bed. A few more months and you and I shall face the cruel tyrant, Death. It will be hard work to play the hypocrite then. When the pulse is faint and few, when the eye strings break, when the tongue is cleaving to the roof of your mouth, it will be in vain to try hypocrisy then. O may God make you sincere! For if you die with an empty profession, you die, indeed. Of all deaths, methinks the most awful is that of the hypocrite and after death, for him to lift up his eyes and find himself lostand forever! O make sure work of it. May God give you true Grace and true faith and may we all meet in Heaven. This is my earnest prayer, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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ANXIETY, AMBITION, INDECISION   
NO. 2871

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1904.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 27, 1876.

**Neither be you of a doubtful mind.   
Luke 12:29.**

THE chief concern of a man should be to see that his own soul is right in the sight of God. Solomon said, Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Many persons think a great deal about the adorning of the body, but do not think anything about the ornaments of the soul. The feeding of the physical frame engrosses much care, but the supply of spiritual food is often neglected. Yet, O Man, you yourself are better than your body! Your immortal soul is worth far more than that poor carcass of yours which will soon become food for worms! And all the things that you have, what are they compared with your inner selfyour real selfyour heart, your soul, your spirit?

In our text, our Savior bids us see to the condition of our mind Neither be you of a doubtful mind. He thus calls our attention to the higher and nobler part of our mind and bids us see to it that it is in a right state. No doubt there are some people who are in easier circumstances than otherssome who are in positions where they enjoy many comforts, while others are in places where they suffer many hardships. But, after all, happiness lies more in the mind than it does in the circumstances in which any individual is found and the man within has far more to do with his own joy or sorrow than anything outside of him has. There have been some who have been perfectly free in a prison, while others have been in absolute bondage with wide estates to roam over. We have known some whose spirits have triumphed when all around has tended to depress them. And we have seen others who were wretched and desponding when they had, apparently, all that heart could wish.

It is the mind which is the main thingit will bring you daylight or midnight, wealth or poverty, peace or war. I wish, dear Friends, that half the time we spend in trying to better our circumstances were spent in bettering ourselves after the right fashion and that even a tenth of the trouble we take to fit our circumstances to our desires were used in fitting our desires to our circumstances. If we did that, how much happier men and women we would be! Try as you may, you cannot alter the world in which your lot is cast and you cannot alter Gods Providential arrangements. So, would it not be better that you should be altered so as to suit the Providence and be resigned to the will of God?

It is beautiful to see how often the Inspired writers of Holy Scripture were busy with what I may call indoor workthe work that has to be done within ones own heart. Bless the Lord, O my Soul, says David, in the 103rd Psalm, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. This indoor work, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, will always pay us best. And our Lord Jesus, in His exhortations, often bids us attend to it. Did He not say to His disciples, Let not your heart be troubled? A little later, He said to them, In the world you shall have tribulation. And He says the same to His disciples in every age. It is no use for you to try to avoid it, for you will have tribulation, yet, Let not your heart be troubled. All the water in the sea will not hurt your vessel as long as you keep it outside the danger begins when it gets inside the ship. So it matters little what is outside you, if all is right within. Have that little bird in your bosom that sings sweetly of the love of God! Wear the flower called hearts-ease in your buttonhole and you may go merrily through a perfect wilderness of trouble and a desert of care! A hurricane of afflictions may beat about you, yet you shall be a blessed manfor all the elements of blessedness are within your own heart. God has given them to you and the devil himself cannot take them away!

In speaking upon this text, I mean to preach a good part of the sermon to myself, for I need it as much as anybody does. But I ask each Brother and Sister to take home to themselves any part that suits them. And before I have done, I shall have a word for you unconverted peopleand I pray God that that word may do you good and that you may cease to be of a doubtful mind. The original of the text is not easy to explain, for the word translated, doubtful, is not used anywhere else in the New Testament. It appears to have something to do with meteors, so that the passage might be rendered, Neither be you of a meteoric mind.

As the word is so unusual, there have been a great many different opinions as to its meaning. Some have said that it relates to high things that float above, such as the clouds. If they are right, our text says to us, Do not be like the cloudsdo not have cloudy minds, blown about with every wind of Doctrine. Others render it, Do not be like the birds, high up in the air, always on the wing, unsettled and uncertain, ever flying about and never at rest. Others find an allusion to the ship that is far out upon the seaand the text says to them, Do not always be at sea, tossed up and down. Have some anchorage. Do not be always drifting to and fro. The word, doubtful, means so much that I do not expect to be able to tell you all that it means, but shall rather give you a few practical thoughts concerning it.

I. Neither be you of a doubtful mind. That is, first, CHILDREN OF GOD, BE NOT ANXIOUS. Be not tossed up and down by your outward circumstances. If God prospers you, do not ride high, as the vessel does when the tide lifts it up. And if He does not prosper you, do not sink down as the vessel does when the tide ebbs away again. Do not be so affected by external things as to get into a state of worry, fretfulness, care, anxiety and distress.

Our Saviors injunction means, Do not be anxious about your temporal affairs. Be prudent. You have no right to spend the money of other people, nor yet your own, in wastefulness. You are to be careful and discreet, for every Christian should remember that he is only a steward and that he is accountable to his Master for whatever he has and the use he makes of it. But when you have done your best with your little, do not worry because you cannot make it more. And when you have done your best to meet your expenses, do not sit down and wring your hands because you cannot lessen them. You cannot make a shilling into a sovereign, but be thankful if you have the shilling! And if you sometimes find that you must live from hand to mouth, remember that you are not the first child of God who has had his manna every morning, nor the first of Gods servants to have bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening with nothing to lay by for the morrow. If this is your case, be not staggered and astonished, as though some new thing had happened to you! And do not begin to fret, and fume, and worry and trouble yourself about what you cannot help. Can you alter it with all your worrying?

Have youyou who are in the habit of worrying and frettingever made any profit by doing so? How much a year do you think that anybody would give you for all your fretting? How much has it brought you? Come, Brother, if it is a good business, I would like to go into partnership with you! But I should like first to know something about your profits. As I look at your face, I notice that it is care-worn and anxious. That does not seem to indicate that the business is a profitable one. If I listen to your speech, I hear you murmuring a great deal instead of praising God. That does not seem to me to be a profitable concern. In fact, as far as I have ascertained, either by my own experience or by the observation of others, I have never discovered that anxiety has comforted anybody, or that it has brought any grist to the mill, or any meal to the barrel! Well, if a thing does not pay, what is the good of it?

But perhaps you say, I cannot help fretting and worrying. No, my good Brother or Sister, but do you not think that the Lord can help you to help it and that your faith in Him, if it were what it ought to be, would soon be the end of your distress and trouble? Have you not found out yetI havethat the very anxiety which arises through your being in a difficulty, unfits you to meet that difficulty? You are in a great hurry to do something or other and that something or other does more mischief than could possibly have happened if you had kept still, resting in the Lord and waiting patiently for Him! Instead of doing so, you rush this way and that way, and so add to your worries instead of decreasing them. You are like the servant with the basket of eggs on her head, who shakes her head because she is afraid her eggs will falland makes them fall by the very process of her trembling!

So, you go and make ten troubles in endeavoring to get out of one. There is a text that is very easy to repeat, but not always so easy to obeyStand still, and see the salvation of God. But you want to see your own salvation, so you cannot stand still! There is many a man who has run before Gods cloud and who has been very glad to run or even to crawl back again. Some people are so anxious to carve for themselves that they cut their own fingers! They had better leave the carving in the hands of God and take what He gives them, for He knows far better than they do what is good for themand His hand is infinitely wiser than theirs can possibly be.

Oh, but, says one, I feel that I must be doing something. That, doing, will just be your undoing unless you stop and consider what God would have you do! The probability is that your action will be unwise and hasty while you are in your present feverish condition. Wait till you get quite cool, Brotheryou will see your way far better then. At the present moment you are in such a fidget and flutter that you are very apt to mistake your right hand for your left and to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

You say again that you cannot help being anxious. Then, my dear Friend, I must very solemnly ask you what is the difference between you and the man of the world? There is an orphan child and it is afraid it will not be fedbut you have a Father in Heavenand if you are afraid, surely, it is of little use for you to have such a Father! Are you not dishonoring His holy name by such conduct as that? Do you not think that others who see you in this condition will say, There is not much power in religion, for these people, who profess to be Christians, are not comforted by it in their time of troubleand it will not be of much use to them in the hour of their death. Remember Jeremiahs questions, If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein you trust, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swelling of Jordan? Surely it is time that we plucked up courage and were not so easily disheartened, for we have worse trials on ahead than any we have yet been called to endure!

That is just what I dread, says one. What would you do, then, Brother? I have been thinking that perhaps I had better turn back. But you have no armor for your backand the perils of going back are far worse than the perils of going forward! Therefore I charge you, if you are, indeed, a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, to play the man and let your faith overcome your fear! Obey that gracious word, Casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you. Do you not believe that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose? You say that you do. Do you not believe that?

*He sits a Sovereign on His Throne*

*And rules all things well?*   
You say that you do. Do you not believe He loves you with an everlasting love? Do you not know that He spared not His only-begotten Son, but delivered Him up for you? And do you think that, after having done so much for you, He will withhold from you anything that is necessary for your well-being? You must not think so. Brother, Sister, it would be unkind, ungenerous, ungrateful to think so! Therefore, be not of an anxious or doubtful mind concerning temporal things.

Well, says one, as far as temporal supplies are concerned, I can leave them entirely in the hands of God, but my anxieties arise from quite another form of trouble. There is a Christian Brother who is at enmity against me and he has been spreading an ill report about me, although I have earnestly sought to walk before God in holy fear and have watched every step that I have taken. And I feel so worried that I do not know what to do. Well, dear Friend, there is one rule which you will generally find to be applicable in such a case as yours. When you do not know what to do, do not do anything at all! And, usually, if the trouble has arisen through false reports about your own character, the least said, the soonest mended. I believe that if there is anything you want to have well done, you had better do it yourself, but there is one exception to that rule and that is the matter of defending yourself. No defense is needed for a good man who can say, By the Grace of God I am what I am. Therefore you may leave that matter of your own character and, as to the good Brother not getting on with you, if you have done anything that has grieved him, confess the wrong. Well, perhaps if I did, he might not meet me in the same spirit. You have nothing to do with that, dear Friendthat is his business and Gods. You go and do the right thing and then be no longer anxious about it, but leave the result with God.

I hear another Brother say, My anxiety has nothing to do with my personal affairs. I am anxious about the cause of Godthe Church over which I presidethe Bible class that I conductthe mission field that I try to cultivate. Somehow, things do not go as I wish and I am greatly concerned that they are not more prosperous. And what are you doing, good Friend, to bring about that result? Are you telling the Lord about it and agonizing before Him in prayer? That is right, but if you are telling yourself about it and your anxiety is confined to yourself, no good will come of that. But, Sir, all things seem to be going amiss. Yes, I am constantly hearing that. There are some of our friends who believe that we have fallen upon the worst days that have ever been known in this world! Well, it may be so. I cannot say much about that. But I will say this, my dear Friendsthat you and I are not of anything like so much importance to the Church of God as we may have imagined! And the particular department of work which has been entrusted to us, though we ought to think well of it, and to do it well, it is not, after all, the hinge upon which the whole universe turns! God managed the world very well before we were born and He will manage it quite as well when we are dead! His Church will not die, for the Lord still lives and His Spirit still abides in the Church and, therefore, it must live.

But there will be trouble for us if we begin to think that everything depends upon us. Uzza was well intentioned, no doubt, yet God killed him for putting forth his hand to stop the Ark of the Lord from falling. Let none of us become guilty of Uzzas sin! It is our business to serve the Lord with all our heart and soul, just as Martha, with all her energy, sought to prepare a supper for Jesus. But when we begin to be cumbered about our service, then we may expect the Master to say to us, as He did to Martha, You are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is necessary; and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. It is not well that we should be cumbered about our service! No, Brothers and Sisters; the Lord loves His Church far better than we do and He knows far better than we do how to manage her affairs, so we must

*Just do the little we can do,   
And leave the rest with Him.*

May His blessed Spirit help us so to get rid of all improper anxieties! II. Another meaning of the text will make a second division of our sub  
ject. BE NOT AMBITIOUS. That is, do not fly high. Do not be as the   
clouds and the meteors, that not only move about and are uncertain in  
their movements, but are also high and lofty.   
Some people are troubled because they are aiming at amassing great  
wealth. Years ago if anybody had told them they would one day possess   
what they have already obtained, they would have thought it was an  
amazing sum, more than sufficient to satisfy all their desires. If somebody had asked them, Will you retire from business then, and be quite   
happy and content? they would have answered, Oh, yes, certainly!  
Well, they have already gathered far more than that, yet they are as   
grasping as ever and they want more, and more, and more and they are   
by no means content with what they have, much as it is. We should all  
be happier than we are if we were more contented with what is really all   
that we need, namely having food and clothes, having neither poverty nor

riches. Many men have been like that dog in the fable that had meat in   
his mouth, but did not eat it because he saw the reflection of it in the   
water and was so anxious to get that reflection as well as the substance   
that he already had that he lost the piece that he might have eaten! Such   
people are always trying to grasp the reflection instead of enjoying what  
God has given them. Let us not be of such a mind as that.   
There are others who are ambitious to attain a higher position. They   
might be very well content with the kind, good friends they have, but  
there was a lord who once looked at themand ever since that time they  
have thought it a very wonderful thing to know a real, live lord. I have   
heard of a man who used to boast that the king once spoke to him and   
though his majesty only told him to get out of the way, he was very  
proud of having been addressed by the king! And there are many people   
who think a great deal of that sort of thing. They are only shillings now,  
but they are anxious to get among the sovereigns. I have no sympathy  
with that desirethe best society in the world for me is a company of the   
Lords people and whether they are poor or rich, so long as they are   
Gods saints, I feel myself at home with them! If a Brother spoils the   
Queens English and makes a great many mistakes in pronunciation,   
that does not matter to me. The real piety that is in the manthe Grace   
of God that is in his soulthat is the thing which ought to please us! To   
be proud of our association with the great ones of the earth is both a folly   
and a sin on the part of any child of God.

Sometimes we are ambitious in the service of God beyond what we ought to be. You are doing well in that little Chapel, my Brotherthe place is full and God is blessing youbut you want a bigger place, or you want to get away from those poor people whom the Lord has helped through your ministry. Possibly, my Friend, you are a Sunday school teacher and you have charge of the infants, and they love you. And you are fitted for the work, yet you are not content to be an infant class teacher, you would like a senior classand a great stupid you would make of yourself if you had such a class, for you are not adapted for it! It is always well to be seeking to do more for the Lord Jesus Christ, but I would earnestly discourage you from endeavoring to attain to a higher position merely for the sake of occupying it. Dear Brothers and Sisters, be not ambitious in this sense, for, after all, what is human greatness?

Have you ever met with a really great man who would have given a penny for his own greatness? Do you not know that the higher you rise, even in the Church of Christ, the more responsibility you have and the heavier burdens you have to carry? Do you not also know that the way to be really great is to be littleand that he who is greatest of all is the one who has learned to be least of all? He who is chief in the Church of Christ is he who serves the Church most and who is willing to go lowest for Christs sake! Cultivate that kind of greatness as much as you like, but put aside the other, and be not of ambitious mind even in your Lords service!

I meet, every now and then, people who are, I hope, Gods children, but they seem to me to have got into a very curious state of mind. They have notions that are not at all according to the realities of everyday lifeflighty notionsromantic notions about their own rights, dignities, importance and so on. Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, some of us were, in our own estimation, very important individuals, were we not, before the Grace of God came into us? But when the Grace of God works in us, we are made to feel that the very lowest and meanest place is a better position than we have any right to take. When we are in our right senses, we never give ourselves those high and mighty airs. A truly humble Believer does not say, So-and-So did not treat me with proper respect. Oh, dear me, what is the proper respect to which you and I are entitled? May the Lord preserve us from such a spirit as that!

But there are some peopleprofessing Christians, toowhose heads are always being filled with that kind of nonsense. They do not seem to have learned that the spirit of Christ is a spirit of meekness which teaches us to bear and forbear, to forgive until seventy times seven, to expect to have our rights trampled on and to be willing to lay them all down for any who please to tread upon them. It is blessed to feel, I will be content to take any place, so long as I can love others and do them good by loving them. As long as I can but love them to Christ and help them to love Christ and manifest the love of Christ to them, I will, by His Grace, be content. O Brothers and Sisters, we all need to go to school to our dear Lord and Master! You have never read that He said anything about His rights, or about defending His dignity. No, He who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords, was the Servant of servants when He was here upon earth! And, truly, he that serves most is the most royal of all. Therefore, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, and then you will not be anxious or ambitious to be great.

III. A third meaning of the text is this, BE YOU NOT OF AN IRRESOLUTE MIND, WITHOUT DECISION OF CHARACTER.   
If you look at the connection of the passage, you will see that this meaning fits in exceedingly well. There are persons in the world who may be described as time-servers. The main consideration with them is what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or how they shall be clothedso they are always watching to see which is the best way to go in reference to those matters. As the old proverb has it, they know on which side their bread is buttered, or, according to another familiar saying, they are waiting to see which way the cat jumps! And when they have ascertained that, their principles will lead them to jump in that particular direction.   
Mr. John Bunyan, in The Pilgrims Progress, has well described just such personsMr. By-Ends and Mr. Fair-Speechand some of us have known their descendants. You remember hearing of the waterman who got his living by looking one way, and pulling another. And that waterman has had a great many sons of very much the same character as himselfand they have made a certain kind of progress in the world by that sort of scheming. But you and I, Beloved, are not to be of an irresolute mind. Every Christian should say, By the Grace of God my mind is made up to serve Him, cost what it may. Does my Lord desire me to keep the Sabbath holy? Sunday is the best day in my particular line of business, but that does not matter to me. My mind is made up to serve the Lordand whatever it costs will make no difference to me. There is a party to be held tonight and I know that if I go to it, I shall have to witness the utmost frivolity, and I shall have to be a partaker in what will be, to me, a good deal of sin. Uncle Jonas will be angry if I dont go, but I mean to do the right thingwhether Uncle Jonas is pleased, or not. That is the way all you who have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts ought to speak. The question, What is right? being answered, you have only to do the right, whatever happens. This is what our Lord meant when He said to His disciples, Neither be you of a doubtful mind.   
Oh, but, some say, we really must look at both sides of that question. There may come a time when we know that a certain course is right, but, if we take it, we may bring ruin upon ourselves and upon others, too. Let me read the 4th and 5th verses of this chapterand when I have done so, there will be no need for you to say anythingBe not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him, which after He has killed, has power to cast into Hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear Him. And the 8th and 9th versesWhoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. Does not that decide you? God grant that it may and that you may henceforth say, I will confess Christ and act for the right and the true and, by the aid of His blessed Spirit I will never hesitate to do as He bids me *Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads, Ill follow where He goes*   
neither will I be of a doubtful mind.   
IV. A fourth meaning of the text is, BE YOU NOT AT SEA SO FAR AS YOUR OWN PERSONAL SALVATION IS CONCERNED.   
Brothers and Sisters, there are some who are not saved, who yet imagine that they are. There are many who know nothing of vital godliness, yet who sing as joyfully as the brightest of saints, never suspecting their real condition in the sight of God. Whenever I meet with a man who never has had a doubt about his own condition, I feel inclined to quote to him those lines of Cowper   
*He has no hope who never had a fear   
And he that never doubted of his state,   
He may perhapsperhaps he maytoo late.* Beware of all presumption! There are some who even decry anything like self-examination. They cannot bear for us to look for the signs and tokens of the Holy Spirits work within them. And if we talk about practical holiness, they say that we are getting upon legal ground and turning aside to the beggarly elements of the Law of God. From all such turn away, for they can do you no good! You are exhorted in the Scriptures to examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith, and to prove yourselves. No, self-examination alone is not sufficientyou must cry with the Psalmist, 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.   
But, on the other hand, there are some who think that doubts and fears are necessary to a child of God. I draw a very grave distinction between doubting the Truth of Gods promise and questioning whether that promise is made to methey are two very different things. To doubt the power of the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse from all sin is one thing, but, sometimes, to question whether I really have trusted in that blood is quite another thing. The first is sinful. The second is only proper and discreet. I would advise everyone to often look to the foundation of their faith, to see whether they really have believed in Jesus and have in their heart the true life which grows out of such faith. But, Brothers and Sisters, there is really no reason in a man saying, Whether I am a child of God, or not, I am sure I do not know. I sometimes hope I am, and so on.

I suppose there are few men who have not, at some time or other suffered pain, but it is not necessary for us to always have a toothache in order to prove that we really are men. And, in like manner, there are few Christians who have never had any doubts, yet it is not necessary to be always doubting in order to prove that we are Christians! But, as we are glad enough to get rid of pain, so are we to be glad to get rid of doubt by fully trusting our Lord who is so worthy of our trust! Dear Brothers and Sisters, you ought to know, you can know, you can know now, whether you are saved or not! At any rate, if I did not know myself to be saved, I would give no sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, till I had found the Savior. If a shadow of a doubt about my being washed in the blood of Christ were on my soul, I would get to my knees and not rise from them until I did really know that Christ had saved me!   
If you are in doubt and yet are content about your condition, I fear that you know nothing at all about the matter, for the true child of God, if he is in any doubt about his salvation, is uneasy till that doubt is gone. He cannot rest till he knows that he is saved and, after all, that is not a very difficult thing to know, for we are told, over and over again in this blessed Book, that he that believes in Christ is not condemned, but has everlasting life! If you have believed in Him, you are not condemnedyou have His word for it. He who trusts to Jesus only, builds on a sure foundation! So, if you are trusting in Him, you may have the full assurance that you have passed from death unto life and shall never come into condemnation. Do not, Brothers and Sisters, go limping along all your life when you might run in the way of Gods commandments! A good old minister of my acquaintance, when people used to say to him that they hoped, and hoped, and never got any further than that, was in the habit of replying, You are always hoping and hopping. I hope you will learn to run one of these daysto run without weariness in the ways of God.   
The last thing I have to do is to bid all here present who have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, to do so at once. My dear Friends, my text says, Neither be you of a doubtful mind. But you cannot help being of a doubtful mind while you remain as you are and I really wish that your conscience would trouble you even more than it now doesthat your uneasiness might become even greater and your unrest yet more unrestful! Look at yourself, my dear Hearer. You have not believed in Christ, so you are in debt to Divine Justice and you are hopelessly bankrupt, for you cannot meet one in a million of the claims that are recorded against you! How can you rest as long as you are thus indebted to God? You are a prisoner, too. When Marshal Bazaine had many of the comforts of life on the Isle of St. Marguerite, off the coast of the South of France, he could not rest till he had regained his liberty. And I marvel how you can be so happy, even with the joys of this world, while you are without the great blessing of spiritual liberty! I wish you felt that you could not rest till you had become emancipated from the bondage of sin and been made the Lords freeman. How would you like be in a condemned cell and not to know when your execution was to take place? I am sure that you would pity any poor creature, whatever his crime, if you could see him under such circumstances. Perhaps you say that you are living in a wide world and not in a prison. Yet you are condemned already! It was said of the old Roman Empire that if a man once broke the law, the whole world was a prison for him, for Caesar had almost universal sway. And God sees you wherever you are and everywhere you are in the condemned cell and, perhaps, before the sun shall rise again, your execution will have taken place.   
I have been told that some years ago there went into the chamber of horrors at Madame Tussauds exhibition, a young gentleman who was foolish enough to put himself under the guillotinein the place which had been occupied by criminals. And as he lay there, with his bare neck exposed to the terrible knife, he was so struck with horror that he was unable to moveand people who went by thought he was one of the wax figures and he could not stir until someone took him away! And, oh, if you did but know where you really are, with that dreadful axe of Divine Justice just above your head, you might well be paralyzed with horror! Only let your breath fail, or your pulse stop and down it descends to your utter destruction! But alas, you are insensible to these things. May the Spirit of God awaken you! May He make you feel your true position and then, I am sure, you will not be content to remain a moment longer of a doubtful and undecided mind!   
Listen, my Friend! That sin of yours can be forgiven, for Jesus died for sinners! That heart of yours can be renewed by Grace, for Jesus lives again! You can be delivered from the wrath to come, for Jesus has gone up on high to plead for just such sinners as you are! What are you to do in order that you may have Christ as your Savior? Why, as the hymn says   
*Only trust Him, only trust Him, Only trust Him now!*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 57:1-6.**

Verse 1. Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusts in You: yes, in the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities pass. The heading of this PsalmTo the chief musician, Al-Taschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cavetells us when it was written. It is one of Davids Golden Psalms. What a mixture of feebleness and strength there is in this first versethe feebleness so beautified by being clothed with the strength of faith! What a turning away from man and what a turning wholly unto the Lord! And, in coming to the Lord, what humility and what pleading for mercy, and for mercy only! Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me. Yet what holy boldness also! For my soul trusts in You. And what joyous confidence and what sweet repose in God! Yes, in the shadow of Your wings, will I make my refuge. If I cannot see the brightness of Your face, the shadow of Your wings shall be enough for me. Only let me get near Youonly permit me humbly to trust You, and it shall be enough for me, until these calamities pass.

2. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performs all things for me. Do you pray like that, my Brother, my Sister? I hope you do cry unto God most high. But do you pray to Him as the One that performs all things for younot merely who can perform all things for you, but who is actually doing it at the present momentworking out your lasting good by everything that is transpiring around you?

3. He shall send from Heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. If all the forces on earth are not sufficient to save His saint, God will send sufficient reserves from the ranks of the heavenly host to preserve His people. Or if He does not determine to preserve them on earth, He will take them away from the earth, to be with Him in Glory. But, in one way or another, they shall be eternally secure!

Mark what the Psalmist says of the voracity of his enemyhe speaks of Saul as him that would swallow me up. And the Believer in Jesus is, at times, such an objective of the unbelievers detestation that he would annihilate him if he could. But God will sooner send help from Heaven for His people than that such a calamity should ever happen.

3, 4. God shall send forth His mercy and His truth. My soul is among lions. What peril David was in and what dangers often surround the best of the menif not from arrows, swords and spearsfrom the hellish artillery of unbridled tongues! A human tongue is soft, but it can cut to the very quick. And the wounds from a cruel tongue are not easily healed. Many a man will bear, as long as he lives, the scars that were made by a slanderous tongue. God can save us, however, even from this great trial, and enable us to actually rejoice in this sharp affliction. It is no strange thing that has happened unto us, for so evil men persecuted the Prophets that were before usas they said all manner of evil against them falsely. God Himself was slandered by the old serpent in the Garden of Eden, so it is not surprising that His children should be still slandered by the serpents seed.

5. 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. Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth. A grand burst of praise and all the grander because of the condition of the man from whom it came! My soul is among lions, he says, but, be You exalted, O God, as if he would say, It does not matter what becomes of me. I shall be content even in this den of lions, so long as You are exalted above the heavens and Your glory 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. Selah. He knew that it would be so and he looked upon it as already accomplishedtheir nets and pits would only injure themselves.

Now look at the next verse in the light of the prayer David had been praying. See what a marvelous act of faith and what a grand result of unwavering confidence in God it is, for a man to be able to sing as David does even when his soul is among lions and fierce and powerful enemies are all round him, seeking his harm!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3549 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

LITTLE, BUT LOVELY   
NO. 3549

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1917.   
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Fear not, little flock, for it is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom.   
Luke 12:32.**

How kind and tender Jesus was towards His disciples! When He spoke sternly, it was to the outside multitude. Many a time was His spirit moved to rebuke them sharply. Very familiarly, however, did He unbend Himself in the presence of the few attached followers who were gathered round Him and drew near to HimHis chosen, His beloved. To them He unveiled His heart. To them He disclosed the things which He had received of the Father. From then, He kept back nothing that pertained to their welfare. If it were not so, I would have told you, was once, at least, His confidential expression. He thus abode with them as a Friend, as an elder Brother, as a loving Father. It is really pleasant to observe how much He thought of themhow deeply He sympathized with themhow far He was from despising them. The great ones of the earth would have shrugged their shoulders and sneered at the poor helpless band that gathered around the Prophet of Nazareth. Not so the Divine Master. Without for a moment concealing the fact that they were a little flock, He looks upon them fondly and applies to them invitingly the very epithet their enemies would have used resentfullylittleas He says, Fear not, little flock, it is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Few in number they were, He calls them a flock. Thus He takes upon Himself the office of a shepherd and by implication He guarantees to them feeding and folding, solace and safeguard! And He speaks of little with a liking. As we often employ diminutive words to express endearment, calling those we love by little names, so does the Savior here seem to dwell upon the littleness of those He loves. The original word might be properly rendered, very little. Fear not, tiny flock. There is a double diminutive on which He seems to harp, although it had a pleasant ring about it. So mothers are known to call their baby children by bantling names in their fondness for the wee creatures. But far surpassing womans love, our Saviors strong affection can no rival know. In mild accents, He seems to say, Never mind how few you are, or how despised. Your feebleness gives you a warmer place in My heart and makes Me press you more closely to My bosom. Hush, hush. Be still. Fear not, little flock.

And, oh, how ready He is with a reason to revive their confidence! It is your Fathers good pleasure. Thus does our beloved Lord recognize His own intimate relation with His disciples. It is your Fathers good pleasure. And who was their Father but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? He might have said, It is My Fathers good pleasurebut then this was the sweeter way of putting itIt is your Fathers good pleasure. They would know that their Father was His Father when He thus said, your Father. But had He said, My Father, they might not have so quickly recollected that He was also their Father or, pondering it, they might have had some doubt on the subject. What He does, therefore, is, in effect, to call Himself their Brother, for if His Father is their Father, then He, Himself, must be their Brother. They are near kinsmen! He puts Himself on an equal footing with them when so speaking! At once He lifts them up to Himself while He goes down to them. It is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Must it not have been delightful to be on such friendly terms with the blessed Lord of Life when He was Incarnate here on earthto have been able to say with John, The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glorythe Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth? Not that we have any need to fret because we have not that privilege, for we have a higher one, inasmuch as Jesus said, It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. It was better, therefore, for us that Jesus should go in order that we might have the abiding Presence of the Holy Spirit, not only to dwell with us, but also to be in us! Oh, that we might realize and enjoy the Comforters Presence at this time! It were ill for us to miss the Saviors company without having the consolation of the Spirit! To be without the bodily Presence of the Lord and without the spiritual Presence of the Holy Spirit were a double loss! Rather let us rejoice that He is in us, and shall be with us evermore. In the Presence of the Comforter we have a higher grade of communion with God than even in the solacing society of the Son of Man. He has gone from us, but He has left the words of His comfort to cheer us. In the power of the Holy Spirit, then, let us talk with one another concerning these words, Fear not, little flock, for it is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom.   
Our attention is here drawn, first, to a little flock and a Great Shepherd. And then to a great fearwhat if I say a variety of fearsand a still greater consolation.

I. IT WAS A LITTLE FLOCK to whom the Savior spoke. Did He mean, by so designating them, that they were few in point of number? Our Saviors ministry, so far as conversion was concerned, was far from being prolific in its immediate results. The zeal of the Great Preacher painfully contrasted with the apathy of the hearers. The Prophet had foreseen the haze that would overhang the mental atmosphere. Who has believed our report? He exclaimed! How few out of Israel were gathered to Him as the fruit of words such as never man spoke, and works such as none but God ever did! It is not recorded of our Savior that He ever preached a sermon through which three thousand were converted. He left that to one of His servants, as if He meant to fulfill that word, Greater things than these shall you do, because I go unto My Father. He would put that honor on His servants and take the disappointment, as He did the shame and the suffering, to Himself. Such is always His loving way. He will take the bleak side of the hill and the rough part of the battle for Himself. If there is any softer road to take, or any higher honors to win, He will give them to His servants. His converts were fewthey were a little flock. Some of you may be residing in localities where there are but a few Believers meeting together. The company looks slender. Do not, I pray you, give place to despondency. You can surely worship God in sincerity and truth, though you may lack the excitement of a crowd. Perhaps you live where there are so few that you can hardly assemble a congregation. Why think yourself denied the privilege of communion with Christ because there are only one or two gathered together in His name? Some of the happiest days Believers have ever known have been alone with Christ! The richest displays of Christs love have been unfolded to the twos and threes and the small family gatherings. He has kept His word to the letter, Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them. Should you happen to belong to a larger company, you are not, therefore, shut out from the promise bequeathed to the few. A church of five or 5,000 Brothers and Sisters is still a little flock! Compared with the vast outlying mass of unbelievers, it is positively infinitesimal! Think of the millions that know not Godthe hundreds of millions that are content to worship idol gods that their own hands have made! Take all Christendom into account and assume for the moment that every nominal professor were a true convert to Christthe Church would form but a feeble minorityit would be but a little flock. Though the day shall come when the Lord will multiply us and increase us greatly in the earth beyond all present computation, yet to this hour the Church of God is only a little flockand this is sometimes an excuse for distrust and a cause of fear.

Not merely in their number were our Lords immediate followers little. They did not represent much of this worlds wealth. They had left all that they had. But their little all did not count for much. An old boat or two upon the lake, some nets, a little fishing tackle, and a few et ceteras surely they were not much to leave! Their capital and their income were alike limited. Their treasurer never had a heavy purse to carry, though he took care to help himself out of its contents. The disciples of Jesus were poor, very poor. They were somewhat akin to their Master, who had not where to lay His head.

Nor from their social position could they exert much influence. Most of them were Galileanscountrymen from the most countrified part of the whole country and, as such, little esteemed. They spoke, no doubt, broad country dialects, and were looked upon as unlearned and ignorant men by those who heard them. When the Holy Spirit was on them, they spoke with great power, but there was not a D. D. among them, nor yet a professor from any university! They had not a solitary rabbi that could be put in the front, neither was there one that could have been called rabbi, if others had chosen to call him so. No prestige did they derive from rank or title, no princes of the blood, no knights or esquires were associated with themthey were all common peasants and fishermen. And I daresay many fears would cross their minds and many gloomy apprehensions would haunt them as they contemplated the strange adventure on which they were called to go forth. They were to preach the Christ of God, and to convert the world to Himyet see what lowly people they were! Had they been brought up in the schools of philosophers, had they been the sons of kings or princes, had they the wealth of Croesus at their control, they might have said, We can do something! But poverty, ignorance and obscurity combined to make them seem little in the eyes of their fellow men! Therefore, the Savior says, Fear not, little flock! Against all adverse circumstances, there stands the actual promise! Be sure of this the Kingdom of God is yours and you will win the day! Your father in Heaven can do without the dignity, the wealth and the learning of this world. He has resolved to give you the Kingdom, so you shall assuredly have it!

Now the Church of God has not much improved in those respects. The aristocracy of the age and the celebrities of the time, those who occupy high places in fashion or in talent, look down contemptuously on the followers of Jesus. We are not put out of countenance. We know full well that not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen. Still, God has chosen the poor of this world. Meek and lowly though they are, He enriches them with the gifts of His Kingdom. The Church in the aggregate, like its individual members, is smallsmall in number and in influencea little flock. And there is another littleness which is common among Christs followers. They are very little in matters of Grace. They think and know themselves to be little. The greatest among them generally think themselves the least. One who came not behind the chief of Apostles thought himself not worthy to be called an Apostle, such was his sense of unworthiness. Little and little worth the Lords people account themselves to be. But in point of age, of growth, of experience, some of them are littlevery little. They have only lately been born-again. They are babes in Grace. Jesus meant them when He said, Fear not, little flock, for it is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom yes, youyou who are new-born sons and daughters! Some, too, are little, not so much because they have been recently converted, as because they have made slow progress. They are of a desponding spirit, and their faith is very feeble. Perhaps they have not walked with God as they should and yet, although they may have little love, little hope, and little joy, little usefulness, and little holiness, compared with what they ought to have, still if they are Believers, if they are the sheep that hear Christs voice, know their Shepherd and follow Himeven to them He says, Fear not, little flock, for it is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom. He will not destroy you because you are not what you should be in point of attainment! What though you are as smoking flax when you ought to be a burning and a shining light, He will not quench you! Though you are a broken reed in the music when you ought to be a full pipe organ, pouring forth volumes of praise, He will not break you, but He will make something of you yet! Though you have such little faith that you do not know whether you have any or not, He knows! A drop of water is as much water as the whole volume of water in the sea, and a particle of Grace is as truly Grace as the great store of Grace laid up in the Everlasting Covenant! A diamond as small as a pins head is as much a diamond as the Koh-I-Noor, so the smallest faith, though it is like a grain of mustard seed, is faith which can move mountains! Jesus knew this hence He would speak comfortably to those who are little as yet, Fear not, you weak and trembling ones! It is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Your weakness shall not witness against you.

Now is not this very precious, that little as the flock may be, the Great Shepherd speaks to them so kindly? Fear not, little flock, He says. And, oh, how His greatness must have struck them as He thus spoke! They looked on Him and saw that He was not little. He had become like themselves in poverty and obscurity, but still there was a Divinity in His Character that could not be eclipsed. He was not little in His birth. Where is He, asked the wise men from the East, who is born King of the Jews? Nor was He little in His wisdom, for when but 12 years old, the doctors in the Temple were astonished at His understanding and answers! He was not little in His power. Did He not teach as one having authority? Did He not heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease as though no symptom could baffle His skill or resist His fiat? He was not little in His influence over mens heartsHe could turn their current like rivers of water whichever way He would. They had a Great ShepherdHe could protect them, He could provide for them, He could lead them onHe could give them the victory and surely bring them into the rest which He had promised them! I feel just now as though the Master stood among us and we were the little flock, conscious that we could do nothing, devise nothing, develop nothing apart from Him. Are there great destinies before us? Is the world to be converted? Surely we are the last people that could ever be able to accomplish it! His Presence is our encouragement. Looking up here and seeing Him standing in the midst, hard by these emblems of His body and blood, we hear His voice saying, All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Behold the baptized Christ giving to His own baptized disciples His own commission! Go, preach the Gospel to every creature. He vouchsafes, moreover His own authority, He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; He that believes not shall be condemned. He is the Commander-in- Chief of the little company of nonconformists to the worlds religion, the Leader of the little band of those who desire to follow the Lamb wherever He goes, the Lord and Master of all those who espouse His Cross, rejoice in His name and are not ashamed to bear His reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation! The Lord grant that the sweetness of these words may come home to the hearts of all of you who are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Let us turn our attention to

II. THE GREAT FEAR AND THE GREAT CONSOLATION IMPLIED IN OUR text. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

One fear which often agitates Gods servants is that which is alluded to in the foregoing paragraphan undue anxiety about temporal things. A fretfulness that distracts ones own mind and greatly dishonors Goda disposition utterly unworthy of the sincere Believer! Christ deals with it in these words, Seek not what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; neither be you of a doubtful mind. Why, child, know this, it is not only your Fathers good pleasure to give you bread and water, but the kingdom! You ask, Will His bounty provide me with food convenient and raiment fit? No, question it not, since He thus promises to put a crown upon your head and give you a mansion in the skies! Surely He who takes the trouble to give you a Kingdom hereafter will not let you starve on the road to it! When Saul went out to seek his fathers donkeys, Samuel met him and anointed him to be king, and after that Saul never fretted about his fathers donkeys anymore! Are you worrying yourselves about the losses you have had, and the best way of trying to recover them? Here are tidings for you. It is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Does not that awaken a new and nobler ambition in your breasts? Never mind the donkeys, now, we have other aims and other prospects to engage our thoughts! Affairs of high estate have drawn my mind away from paltry things. Oh, heir of Heaven, you cannot afford to pine and chafe over the little annoyances of this fleeting life! I remember hearing of a crossing-sweeper who was pursuing his humble avocation with great diligence. He had a valuable broom, which he would not have lost or spoiled without much grief. To him the few pence that purchased it were of great importance. But someonea solicitor of the town tapped him on the shoulder and said, My good Friend, is your name Soand-So? Yes. Did your father live in such a place? He did. Does your brother live in such a place? He does. Then I have the pleasure to tell you that you have come into an estate worth £10,000 a year. I have been told he walked away without his broom! And I can hardly doubt it, for I do not think I would have shouldered the broom, myself, if I had been in his position! Oh, Christians, let me pluck you by the sleeve and tell you of princely possessions for which you may well turn aside from your present paltry pickings! They are not worthy to be compared! Jesus Christ informs you that your Father has given you a kingdom which is infinitely more than all the gold of this world. You may well sayLet those who will, fret about these earthly thingsI will not. I have a kingdom in waiting! I will look out for that inheritance and I will begin to rejoice in it. Thus does Christ put to sleep one of His peoples fears!

Another fear we have arises from watching the clouds, forecasting storms and anticipating trouble. Some of us must confess that we have our desponding moments. One is vexed because he sees his trade gradually slipping away and he anxiously asks, What shall I do in future years? Another, with a large family growing up around him, perplexes himself with the question, What shall I do with those boys and girls of mine? As he watches the various tendencies in the young people, he wonders which way they will go, and he begins to fret. He does not commit his cause to God, but he disquiets himself in vain. This is unwise. Others find that their health declinessymptoms of consumption or some other fell disease alarm them, and they say, What shall I do when this gets worse? How shall I bear it? Perhaps I may have painful operations to endure, says one. Perhaps, says another, I may have to lie bedridden by the year, togetherwhat shall I dooh, what shall I do? Our Lord Jesus Christ counsels you what to do. He says, Let not your heart be troubled. Dont fear. Have you not always found up to now that God has helped and succored you in every grievous plight? You have been foolish enough to dread a thousand dreary ills that never happened to destroy your peace, save in your dreamslike boys in a fog, before whose eyes huge monsters seem to rise, till they come up to the objects of their dread surpriseand find they are not monstrous scares, but modest friends who come to greet them. You have often been the victims of your own credulity in the past, cheated by your fears! May it not be the same in the dilemma to which just now your gloomy fancy points? This I knowwhen we are in our right mind, we cast our care on God. Let the Lord do as He wills to us! He will never be unkind to us! He has always been our FriendHe will never be our foe! He will never put us into the furnace unless He means to purge the dross out of us. Nor will there be one degree more heat in that furnace than is absolutely necessarythere will always be mercy to balance the miseryand strength supplied to support the burden to be borne. Cheer up, then! Fear not, little flock. Let us, for the time being at any rate, shake off all these fears and let us revel in our Fathers good pleasure to give us the kingdom. Rough may be the road, but sure will be the endwe are going to the kingdom! When they fetch a foreign princess over to this land to be married to a princely husband, the ship may be tossed on the sea and the tempest rage with fury, but doubtless the bride would say, I may well bear this slight inconvenience with equanimityI am on the way to be made a queen. We are on board ship today. We are going to a land where we shall all be princes and kingsas many as believe in Jesus! Come, let us pluck up heart! What though the accommodation are sparse, the passage rough and the wind boisterous, there is a kingdom in prospect! So let us make the best of the voyage. Be not faint-hearted yourself, but help others to be cheerful. With a pilgrimage, rather than a voyage in his view, our sacred songster has helped our mirth in his hymn as he sings

*With a scrip on my back and a staff in my hand, I march on in haste through an enemys land The way may be rough, but it cannot be long, So Ill smooth it with hope, and Ill cheer it with song!*

And somewhere or other in this congregation, I think I can hear the hoarse voice of a desponding Believer saying, Ah, I am not troubled about worldly things! I am not distressed about any trials that may or may not happen to me here below. I have a worse fear haunting me! My terror is more terrible. Suppose I should not be in Christ after all? The fear lest I have not really believed in Jesus, that I have not experienced a saving repentance, that I have not laid hold upon eternal life, distracts me. Well, precaution is better than presumptionit is better to go fearing to Heaven than to go presuming to Hell! I would rather be haunted with fears all my life and yet found, at length, when the shadows flee, among those who are Gods delight, than I would be inflated with a dauntless confidence all my days, but undeceived at last when the light breaks in and be left in lonely horror, the victim of despair! Tell me now, dear Friend, what it is you fear. Do you fear Hell? Let me ask you another questionDo you fear sin? If you fear sin, the Lord takes pleasure in you. The Lord takes pleasure in them who fear Him, and in them who hope in His mercy. Your doubts are very painful to bear, no doubt, but for all the distress they cause they will not destroy your soul! Doubting, like a toothache, is more distracting than dangerous. I never heard of its proving fatal to anybody yet. There are fluids of the body which serve as safety valves to the constitution. They ward off worse ills. An anxious solicitude whether you are, indeed, a child of God, of which we would by all means have you relieved as soon as possible, may have a salutary effect, nevertheless, upon your mind. It may make you walk more carefully, pray more fervently and live more scrupulously as one who pines for communion with God! I think I have a commission to say to everyone here who fears sin, and trembles lest he or she should not be found at Gods right hand when He gathers His saints together to Himself, Fear not, for it is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom. If you fear because you feel your unworthiness, it is a blessed fear! Trust in the worthiness of Christ and your fear shall give place to faith! Of if you fear because you perceive your feebleness, I am not surprised. Look to Christs strength and His succor shall be your solace! Your heavenly Father will, of His own good pleasure, give you the Kingdom of God.

Or do I hear anyone say, Well, Sir, my fear is not as to the sincerity of my present profession. I trust I am a Christian. I know that I have believed in Jesus, and I do believe in Him. But my serious misgiving is lest I should not hold on to the end. Beloved Friend that is a fear you ought not to entertain! Never fear it again as long as you live! If there is anything taught in Scripture for certain, it is the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints! I am as sure that Doctrine is as plainly taught as the Doctrine of the Deity of Christ. Words cannot put it more distinctly than God has graciously revealed it. Hear what Christ says. I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christcast not, I beseech you, any suspicion upon the fidelity of our Lord! A question may be raised whether the work is begun by Him, but if He has begun it, there can be no question about His completing it! He never forsakes the work of His hands, or begins to build, and then proves unable or unwilling to rear the superstructure. Lay that fear aside and account it a folly! Do you doubtwhether you are now saved, or whether you shall hold out to the end? Then I counsel you to go back to the Cross and begin again as a penitent sinner, to put your trust in a pardoning Savior. Full many a time I have to do that. I see my evidence cut down like the grass, wither like hay and perish like the green herb. What else, then, can I do, but hurry off to the foot of the Cross, there to stand, and thus to say, Here I come, a sinner, seeking succor from You, my Lord, from You. I come afresh as though I had never come to You before. If You have never washed me, wash me now! If I have never rested in You, here do I lay me down beneath Your shadow. To Your Cross I cling. You will find your fears vanish when you come to the Cross anew. Do this, I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, as often as you get into the dark for a while, for, notwithstanding all fears to the contrary, it really is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom. You have not to earn it by your labor, or merit it as a prizeelse you might despond, or even despair. What is now amiss, I cannot guess, since He will give it to you freely of His own Grace. It is not the Judges good pleasure to award you the kingdom, but it is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Therefore, repose in the Grace of God, rely on the precious blood of Christ and cast your fears to the winds!

I think I hear a sigh. It is a sickly thought, and it comes from one who has a sickly frame. My fear is about dying. How shall I stand the last dread hour of parting life? Shall I bear up in the weakness of that mortal agony? Perhaps, after all, I shall sink as one who is vanquished in the fray. Beloved Brother, there is a peril more perilous than death! What is that? you ask. Why, I answer, Life! To live! To live well! There is the pointto live well. If you do succeed in this, you shall find that to die is nothing but just closing up your lifes story. Be it your main care to run the race with honor, then you shall finish your course with joy! You may leave the dying till the time to die comes, if you will see to the living while the time to live lasts! There is one kind of Grace of which we have no immediate need today, that is dying Grace. We shall not require the timely succor till the time of our departure is at hand. Or if we crave it we shall not have it. Does any one of you put himself on his dying bed in imagination, to forestall the terrors that his fancy paints? He does a very foolish thing. You cannot know what sort of summons you will get to quit your fleshly tabernaclewhat sharp pains you may be called to bearor what sweet comfort may be provided to cheer your spirit when heart and flesh shall fail. Serve God now with all your strength! Rest in the precious blood now! Seek present communion with your living, loving Lord. Doubt not that He will supply you with sufficient Grace for all your future needs! You know not of the good He has in store. As time and space contract, your mind will expand to survey the eternity beyond. As the film comes over these dull organs of sight, the eyes of your understanding will be opened. As you near the banks of Jordan, the fair fields on yonder side will break on your ravished view. You know nothing of them yet. Full many, I guarantee you, who depart this life hear the songs of angels long before their ears are closed to the sounds of earth! And oh, how precious Christ becomes to them! We have seen the flush of glory on their faces! I should think they hardly knew at what moment they entered Heaven, for before they left earth, the radiance of that bright realm dawned upon them in such visions of Glory! They were lifted up to Pisgahs summit and they looked down on this poor earth from an elevation at which we who still sojourn in the valley do greatly marvel

*Jesus can make a dying bed   
Seem soft as downy pillows are!   
While on His breast I lean my head,   
And breathe my life out sweetly there.*

Why, some of us have known Believers who, after trembling all their days, triumphed in their last hours! In the prime of their strength they were frightened of a mousebut in the extremity of their weakness they became so strong that they could face a legion of foes! Nothing could dismay them. Mr. Fearing, who fell over a straw, and said he should never reach the Celestial City, was the very man who died like a giant, singing and shouting with all his might! God is pleased to let some of His servants live in the darkand die in the light. I think some of us have our candle lit at one watch of the night, some at another. You may have begun your spiritual life in the dark and your path has grown brighter and brighter. Or you may have begun in the light and have since passed through seasons in which darkness has prevailed, or the lamp that guides your feet has dimly burned. God puts some of His bravest servants to bed in the dark because they can bear it, but others cannot. They cross over the river and angels come to meet them. Do not darken your days with direful dreams of dreaded death! Perhaps you will die in your sleep and never know a pang. Perhaps you never will dieChrist may come and take you to Himself. It may prove such a glorious thing to die, that you may say, with Halliday, Call this dying? Then it is worthwhile to live, to die like this! Death may have more of translation than of dissolution in it. If the dogs of Hell howl at you, bid them hold their tongue. Your Fathers good pleasure will not be frustratedyour fair prospects will not be disappointed. Does Conscience accuse you of slips and falls? Tell Conscience of the precious blood, and say, My Fathers good pleasure will rescue His ransomed child from all his sins. Do doubts and fears come up like a swelling torrent? Stem them all with this blessed assuranceGods counsel will stand, and He will do all His pleasure. We who have put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ shall assuredly possess the Kingdom of God forever and ever!

Oh, how I wish you, all of you, belonged to the number of Christs sheep! Oh, that everyone of you had the promise of the kingdom! The Lord bring you to the feet of Jesus! May the Lord show you what sinners you are and what a Savior He is! Would to God you might all believe in Him and pass from death unto life! The fearless transgressor shall fail without help, while the fearful disciple shall be fondled with Fatherly care. Herd together, you little ones, as a flockthe heritage is reserved for you. It is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

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 #2302 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

WATCHING FOR CHRISTS COMING   
NO. 2302

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, APRIL 2, 1893. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, APRIL 7 1889.

**Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to eat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch,**

**and find them so, blessed are those servants.   
Luke 12:37, 38.**

I AM about to speak of the Second Coming of Christ and I felt thankful that my dear Brothers prayer, although we had not been in consultation with one another upon the matter, was in every way so suitable to the subject upon which I am to speak. He led us in prayer to think of our coming Lord, so that I trust you are on the margin of the subject, now, and that you will not have to make any very great exertion of mind to plunge into mid-stream and be carried away with the full current of thought concerning the Second Advent of the Savior. It is a very appropriate topic when we come to the Lords Table, for, as that prayer reminded us, the Lords Supper looks backward, and is a memorial of His agony. But it also looks forward and is an anticipation of His Glory. Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth, For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you show the Lords death till He comes. By looking forward, in a right state of heart, to that Second Coming of Christ which is the joy of His Church, you will also be in a right state of heart for coming to the Communion Table. May the Holy Spirit make it to be so!

The posture at the Communion Table, as you know, according to our Lords example, was not that of kneeling, but that of reclining. The easiest position which you can assume is the most fitting for the Lords Supper, but remember that the supper was no sooner finished, than, they sang a hymn, and when that hymn was concluded, they went out into the Mount of Olives to the agonies of Gethsemane. It often seems to me as if now, after finding rest at the Table by feeding upon Christ, whose real Presence we havenot after a carnal sort, but after a spiritual sortafter that, we sing a hymn, as if we would go out to meet our Lord in His Second Coming, not going to the Mount of Olives to see Him in a bloody sweat, but to hear that word of the angel, This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven.

I do not think we ought to feel at all surprised if we were to go always expecting Him, not knowing at what hour the Master of the house shall come. The world does not expect Himit goes on with its eating and drinking, its marrying and giving in marriagebut His own family should expect Him. When He will return from the wedding, I trust that He will not find the door shut against Him, but that we shall be ready to open to our Lord immediately when He knocks. That is the object of the few words that I shall have to say, tonight, to stir you up, and my own heart, also, to be always watching for Christs Second Coming.

I. First, THE LORD WILL COME. He that has come once is to come again. He will come a second time. The Lord will come.   
He will come again, for He has promised to return. We have His own word for it. That is our first reason for expecting Him. Among the last of the words which He spoke to His servant John are these, Surely I come quickly. You may read it, I am coming quickly. I am even now upon the road. I am traveling as fast as wisdom allows. I am always coming, and coming quickly. Our Lord has promised to come and to come in Person. Some try to explain the Second Coming of Christ as though it meant the Believer dying. You may, if you like, consider that Christ comes to His saints in death. In a certain sense, He does, but that sense will never bear out the full meaning of the teaching of the Second Advent with which the Scripture is full. No, the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. He who went up to Heaven will come down from Heaven and stand, in the latter day, upon the earth. Every redeemed soul can say with Job, Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. Christ will as certainly be here again in Glory as He once was here in shame, for He has promised to return.   
Moreover, the great scheme of redemption requires Christs return. It is a part of that scheme that, as He came once with a sin offering, He should come a second time without a sin offering, that, as He came once to redeem, He should come a second time to claim the inheritance which He has so dearly bought. He came once, that His heel might be bruised. He comes, again, to break the serpents head and, with a rod of iron, to dash His enemies in pieces, as potters vessels. He came, once, to wear the crown of thorns. He must come, again, to wear the diadem of universal dominion. He comes to the marriage supper. He comes to gather His saints together. He comes to glorify them with Himself on this same earth where once He and they were despised and rejected of men. Understand this, that the whole drama of redemption cannot be perfected without this last act of the coming of the King!   
The complete history of Paradise Regained requires that the New Jerusalem should come down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husbandand it also requires that the heavenly Bridegroom should come riding forth on His white horse, conquering and to conquer, King of kings and Lord of lords, amidst the everlasting hallelujahs of saints and angels! It must be so. The man of Nazareth will come again! None shall spit in His face, then, but every knee shall bow before Him. The Crucified shall come, again, and though the nail prints will be visible, no nails shall, then, fasten His dear hands to the tree. But instead thereof, He shall grasp the scepter of universal sovereignty and He shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah!   
When will He come? Ah, that is the question, the question of questions! He will come in His own time. He will come in due time. A brother minister, calling upon me, said, as we sat together, I should like to ask you a lot of questions about the future. Oh, well! I replied, I cannot answer you, for I daresay I know no more about it than you do. But, he said, what about the Lords Second Advent? Will there not be the millennium, first? I said, I cannot tell whether there will be the millennium, first, but this I know, the Scripture has left the whole matter, as far as I can see, with an intentional indistinctness, that we may be always expecting Christ to come, and that we may be watching for His coming at any hour and every hour. I think that the millennium will commence after His coming, and not before it. I cannot imagine the Kingdom with the King absent. It seems to me to be an essential part of the Millennial Glory that the King shall then be revealed. At the same time, I am not going to lay down anything definite upon that point. He may not come for a thousand years. He may come tonight. The teaching of Scripture is, first of all, In such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes. It is clear that if it were revealed that a thousand years must elapse before He would come, we might very well go to sleep for that time, for we should have no reason to expect that He would come when Scripture told us He would not.   
Well, answered my friend, but when Christ comes, that will be the General Judgment, will it not? Then I quoted these texts, The dead in Christ shall rise first. But the rest of the dead lived not, again, until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. I said, There is a resurrection from among the dead to which the Apostle Paul labored to attain. We shall all rise, but the righteous shall rise a thousand years before the ungodly. There is to be that interval of time between the one and the other. Whether that is the Millennial Glory, or not, this deponent says not, though he thinks it is. But this is the main point, the Lord shall come. We know not when we are to expect His coming. We are not to lay down, as absolutely fixed, any definite prediction or circumstance that would allow us to go to sleep until that prediction was fulfilled, or that circumstance was apparent.   
Will not the Jews be converted to Christ, and restored to their land? enquired my friend. I replied, Yes, I think so. Surely they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son. And God shall give them the Kingdom and the Glory, for they are His people, whom He has not forever cast away. The Jews, who are the natural olive branches, shall yet be grafted into their own olive tree, again, and then shall be the fullness of the Gentiles. Will that be before Christ comes, or after? asked my friend. I answered, I think it will be after He comes, but whether or not, I am not going to commit myself to any definite opinion on the subject.   
To you, my dear Friends, I sayRead for yourselves, and search for yourselves, for still, this stands first, and is the only thing that I will insist upon tonightthe Lord will come. He may come now. He may come tomorrow. He may come in the first watch of the night, or the second watch, or He may wait until the morning watchbut the one word that He gives to you all is, Watch! Watch! Watch! that whenever He shall come, you may be ready to open to Him and to say, in the language of the hymn we sang just now   
*Hallelujah!   
Welcome, welcome, Judge Divine!*   
So far I know that we are Scriptural and, therefore, perfectly safe in our statements about the Lords Second Advent.

Brothers and Sisters, I would be earnest on this point, for the notion of the delay of Christs Coming is always harmful, however you arrive at it, whether it is by studying prophecy, or in any other way. If you come to be of the opinion of the servant mentioned in the 45th verse, you are wrong If that servant says in his heart, My lord delays his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looks not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. Do not, therefore, get the idea that the Lord delays His Coming and that He will not or cannot come as yet. Far better would it be for you to stand on the tiptoe of expectation and to be rather, disappointed, to think that He does not come.   
I do not wish you to be shaken in mind so as to act fanatically or foolishly, as certain people did in America, when they went out into the woods with ascension dresses on, so as to go straight up all of a sudden! Fall into none of those absurd ideas that have led people to leave a chair vacant at the table and to put an empty plate because the Lord might come and need it! And try to avoid all other superstitious nonsense. To stand star-gazing at the prophecies, with your mouth wide open, is just the wrong thing to do! Far better will it be to go on working for your Lord, getting yourself and your service ready for His appearing, and cheering yourself all the while with this thought, While I am at work, my Master may come. Before I get weary, my Master may return. While others are mocking at me, my Master may appear! And whether they mock or applaud, is nothing to me. I live before the great Taskmasters eyes, and do my service knowing that He sees me and, expecting that, by-and-by, He will reveal Himself to me, and then He will reveal me and my right intention to misrepresenting men.   
That is the first point, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord will come. Settle that in your minds. He will come in His own time and we are always to be looking for His appearing.   
II. Now, secondly, THE LORD BIDS US WATCH FOR HIM. That is the marrow of the textBlessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, shall find watching.   
Now what is this watching? Not wishing to use my own words, I thought that I would call your attention to the context. The first essential part of this watching is that we are not to be taken up with present things.

You remember that the 22nd verse is about not taking thought what you shall eat, or what you shall drinkyou are not to be absorbed in that. You who are Christians are not to live the fleshly, selfish life that asks, What shall I eat and drink? How can I store up my goods? How can I get food and raiment, here? You are something more than dumb, driven cattle that must think of hay and water. You have immortal spirits! Rise to the dignity of your immortality! Begin to think of the Kingdom, the Kingdom so soon to come, the Kingdom which your Father has given you and which, therefore, you must certainly inherit! Think of the Kingdom which Christ has prepared for you, and for which He is making you kings and priests unto God, that you may reign with Him forever and ever. Oh, be not earthbound! Do not cast your anchor, here, in these troubled waters. Build not your nest on any of these treesthey are all marked for the axe and are coming downand your nest will come down, too, if you build it here. Set your affection on things above, up yonder

*Up where eternal ages roll,   
Where solid pleasures never die,   
And fruits eternal feast the soul.*

There project your thoughts and your anxietiesand have a care about the world to come. Be not anxious about the things that pertain to this life. Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Reading further down, in the 35th verse, you will notice that watching implies keeping ourselves in a serviceable conditionLet your loins be girded about. You know how the Orientals wear flowing robes which are always getting in their way. They cannot walk without being tripped up, so that, if a man has a piece of work on hand, he just tucks in his robe under his belt, tightens his belt up tightly, and gets ready for his taskas we would say in English, turning the Oriental into the Western figurerolling up your shirtsleeves and preparing for work. That is the way to wait for the Lord, ready for service, that, when He comes, He may never find you idle.

I called to see a Sister one morning and when I called, she was cleaning the front steps with some whitening, and she said, Oh, my dear Pastor, I am sorry that you should call upon me just now! I would not have had you see me like this on any account. I answered, That is how I like to see you, busy at your work. I should not have liked to have come in and caught you talking to your neighbor over the back palings. That would not have pleased me at all. May your Lord, when He comes, find you just so, doing your duty! You see exactly what is meantyou are to be doing your dutyyou are to be engaged about those vocations to which God has called you. You are to be doing it all out of love to Christ and as service for Him. Oh, that we might watch in that style, with our loins girded about! Work, and wait, and watch! Can you put those three things together? Work, and wait, and watch! This is what your Master asks of you.

And next, He would have us wait with our lights burning. If the Master comes home late, let us sit up late for Him. It is not for us to go to bed till He comes home. Have the lights all trimmed. Have His chamber well lit have the entrance-hall ready for His approach. When the King comes, have your torches flaming, that you may go out to meet the royal Bridegroom and escort Him to His home! If we are to watch for the Lord as we ought, it must be with lamps burning. Are you making your light to shine among men? Do you think that your conduct and character are an example that will do your neighbors good and are you trying to teach others the way of salvation? Some professors are like dark lanterns, or candles under a bushel. May we never be such! May we stand with our lamps trimmed and our lights burning and we, ourselves, like unto men that wait for their Lord, not walking in darkness, nor concealing our light, but letting it shine brightly! That is the way to watch for Christ, with your belt tight about you because you are ready for work, and your lamp flaming out with brightness because you are anxious to illuminate the dark world in which you live.

To put it very plainly, I think that watching for the Coming of the Lord means acting just as you would wish to be acting if He were to come. I saw, in the Orphanage schoolroom, that little motto, What would Jesus do? That is a very splendid motto for our whole life, What would Jesus do in such a case and in such a case? Do just that. Another good motto is, What would Jesus think of me if He were to come? There are some places into which a Christian could not go, for he would not like his Master to find him there. There are some kinds of amusements into which a Believer would never enter, for he would be ashamed for his Master to come and find him there. There are some conditions of angry temper, of pride, petulance, or spiritual sloth in which you would not like to be if you felt that the Master was coming. Suppose an angels wing should brush your cheek just as you have spoken some unkind word and a voice should say, Your Master is comingyou would tremble, I am sure, to meet Him in such a condition! Oh, Beloved, let us try, every morning, to get up as if that were the morning in which Christ would come! And when we go up to bed at night, may we lie down with this thought, Perhaps I shall be awakened by the ringing out of the silver trumpets heralding His Coming. Before the sun arises, I may be startled from my dreams by the greatest of all cries, The Lord is come! The Lord is come! What a check, what an incentive, what a bridle, what a spur such thoughts as these would be to us! Take this for the guide of your whole lifeact as if Jesus would come during the act in which you are engagedand if you would not wish to be caught in that act by the Coming of the Lord, let it not be your act.

The second verse of our text speaks about the master coming in the second watch, or in the third watch. We are to act as those who keep the watches of the age for Christ. Among the Romans it was as it is on board shipthere were certain watches. A Roman soldier, perhaps, stood on guard for three hours, and when he had been on the watch for three hours, there came another sentry who took his place, and the first man retired and went back to the barracks. And the fresh sentinel stood in his place during his allotted time. Brothers and Sisters, we have succeeded a long line of watchmen! Since the days of our Lord, when He sent out the chosen 12 to stand upon the citadel and tell how the night waxed or waned, how have the watchers come and gone! Our God has changed the watchers, but He has kept the watch. He still sets watchmen on the walls of Zion who cannot hold their peace day or night, but must watch for the Coming of their Master, watch against evil times, watch against error and watch for the souls of men.

At this time some of us are called to be specially on the watch and dare we sleep? After such a line of lynx-eyed watchmen, who counted not their lives dear unto them that they might hold their post, and watch against the foe, shall we be cowards and be afraid, or shall we be sluggards and go to our beds? By Him that lives, and was dead, and is alive forevermore, we pray that we may never be guilty of treason to His sacred name and Truth! But may we watch on to the last moment when there shall ring out the clarion cry, Behold, the Bridegroom comes! Go you out to meet Him. People of the Tabernacle, you are set to watch, tonight, just as they did in the brave days of old! Whitefield and Wesleys men were watchers and those before them, in the days of Luther and of Calvin, and backward even to the days of our Lord! They kept the watches of the night and you must do the same, until

*Upstarting at the midnight cry,   
Behold your heavenly Bridegroom near,*   
you go forth to welcome your returning Lord.

We are to wait with one objective in view, viz., to open the door to Him and to welcome Himthat when He comes and knocks, they may open unto Him immediately. Perhaps you know what it is to go home to a loving, tender wife and children who are watching for you. You have been on a journey. You have been absent for some little time. You have written them letters which they have greatly valued. You have heard from them, but all that is nothing like your personal presence! They are looking out for you and if, perhaps, the boat should fail you, or the train is lateif you arrived at eleven or twelve oclock at night, you would not expect to find the house all shut up and nobody watching for you! No, you had told them that you would come and you were quite sure that they would watch for you. I feel rebuked, myself, sometimes, for not watching for my Master when I know that, at this very time, my dogs are sitting against the door, waiting for meand long before I reach home, there they will be and, at the first sound of the carriage wheels, they will lift up their voices with delight because their master is coming home! Oh, if we loved our Lord as dogs love their masters, how we should catch the first sound of His Comingand be waiting, always waitingand never happy until at last we should see Him!

Pardon me for using a dog as a picture of what you ought to be, but when you have attained to a state above that, I will find another illustration to explain my meaning.

III. Now, lastly, THERE IS A REWARD FOR WATCHERS. Their reward is this, Blessed are those servants, whom the master, when he comes, shall find watching.

They have a present blessedness . It is a very blessed thing to be on the watch for Christ, it is a blessing to us now. How it detaches you from the world! You can be poor without murmuring. You can be rich without worldliness. You can be sick without sorrowing. You can be healthy without presumption. If you are always waiting for Christs Coming, untold blessings are wrapped up in that glorious hope. Every man that has this hope in him purifies himself even as He is pure. Blessednesses are heaped up one upon another in that state of heart in which a man is always looking for his Lord.

But what will be the blessedness when Jesus does come? Well, a part of that blessedness will be in future service. You must not think that when you have done working here, you Sunday school teachers, and those of us who preach and teach, that the Master will say, I have discharged you from My service. Go and sit on a heavenly mountain and sing yourselves away forever and ever. Not a bit of it! I am but learning how to preach, nowI shall be able to preach, by-and-by. You are only learning to teach nowyou will be able to teach, by-and-by. Yes, to angels and principalities, and powers, you shall make known the manifold wisdom of God! I sometimes aspire to the thought of a congregation of angels and archangels, who shall sit and wonder as I tell what God has done for me and I shall be to them an everlasting monument of the Grace of God to an unworthy wretch, upon whom He looked with infinite compassion and saved with a wonderful salvation!

All those stars, those worlds of lightwho knows how many of them are inhabited? I believe there are regions beyond our imagination to which every child of God shall become an everlasting illumination, a living example of the love of God in Christ Jesus! The people in those far distant lands could not see Calvary as this world has seen it, but they shall hear of it from the redeemed! Remember how the Lord will say, Well done, you good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things? He is to keep on doing something, you see. Instead of having some little bit of a village to govern, he is to be made ruler over some great province. So it is in this passage. Read the 44th verseOf a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he has. That is, the man who has been a faithful and wise steward of God, here, will be called of God to more eminent service hereafter. If he serves his Master well, when his Master comes, He will promote him to still higher service!

Do you not know how it used to be in the Spartan army? Here is a man who has fought well and been a splendid soldier. He is covered with wounds on his breast. The next time that there is a war, they say, Poor fellow, we will reward him! He shall lead the way in the first battle! He fought so well before, when he met 100 with a little troop behind him now he shall meet ten thousand with a larger troop! Oh! you say, that is giving him more work. That is Gods way of rewarding His people and a blessed thing it is for the industrious servant! His rest is in serving God with all his might. This shall be our Heaven, not to go there to roost, but to be always on the wing, forever flying and forever resting at the same time. They do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face. These two things, blended together, make a noble ambition for every Christian!

May the Lord keep you waiting, working, watching, that when He comes, you may have the blessedness of entering upon some larger, higher, nobler service than you could accomplish, now, for which you are preparing by the lowlier and more arduous service of this world! God bless you, Beloved, and if any of you do not know my Lord and, therefore, do not look for His appearing, remember that He will come whether you look for Him or not. And when He comes, you will have to stand at His bar. One of the events that will follow His Coming will be your being summoned before His Judgment Seathow will you answer Him, then? How will you answer Him if you have refused His love and turned a deaf ear to the invitations of His mercy? If you have delayed, and delayed, and delayed, and delayed, how will you answer Him? How will you answer Him in that day? If you stand speechless, your silence will condemn you and the King will say, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away.

God grant that we may believe in the Lord Jesus unto life eternal and then wait for His appearing from Heaven, for His loves sake! Amen. EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON. **LUKE 12:12-48.**

Verses 13, 14. And one of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And He said unto him, Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you? Our Lord kept to His proper business, which was the preaching of the Gospel and the healing of the sick. We find, in these days, that the minister of the Gospel is asked to do almost everything. He must be a politician. He must be a social reformer. He must be, I know not what! For my part, I often feel as if I could answer, Who made me to do anything of the kind? If I can preach the Gospel, I shall have done well if I do that to the glory of God and to the salvation of men. Surely there are enough people to be judges and dividers, there are quite sufficient politicians to attend to politics and plenty of men who feel themselves qualified to direct social reforms. Some of us may be spared to attend to spiritual affairs.

15. And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a mans life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. Jesus gave His hearers a good moral and spiritual lesson from the occurrence which they had witnessed, and then passed on to speak of the matter which always occupied His thoughts.

16, 17. And He spoke a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth, plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? He did not enquire, Where can I find a needy case in which I may use my superfluity for charity? Oh, no! How can I hoard it? How can I keep it all to myself? This was a selfish, worldly man.

18-20. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, You fool. Other men said of him, This is a wise man. He minds the main chance. He is a fellow plentifully endowed with good sense and prudence. But God said unto Him, You fool.

20. This night your soul shall be required of you. I should like you to set that up as the counter picture to the one that we had this morning, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise. [Sermon #2078, Volume 35The Believing ThiefRead/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] That was said by Christ to the penitent thief, but to this impenitent rich man, God said, This night your soul shall be required of you.

20, 21. Then whose shall those things be, which you have provided? So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. He that lays up treasure for himself. That was the chief point of this mans wrong-doinghis selfishness. His charity began at home and ended there. He lived only for himself.

22, 23. And He said unto His disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat; neither for the body, what you shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Have no anxious, carking care. Do not be looking after the inferior things and neglecting your soul. Take care of your soulyour body will take care of itself better than your soul can. The raiment for the body will come in due time, but the clothing for the soul is the all-important matter. Therefore, see to that.

24-27. 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? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If you, then, are not able to do that thing which is least, why take you thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. The lilies simply stand still in the sunlight and silently say to us, See how beautiful are the thoughts of God? If we could just drink in Gods love and then, almost without speech, show it in our lives, how we should glorify His name!

28. If then God so clothes the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith! But you have some faith, otherwise the Savior would not have said to you, O you of little faith! The man who has no faith may well go on fretting, toiling, spinning, but he that has faith, as he goes forth to his daily labor, looks beyond that to the God of Providence, and thus God keeps him without care, and provides for him.

29, 30. And seek not you what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, neither be you of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knows that you have need of these things. He knows that you must go and work for these thing, but He would not have you fret and fume about them. Your Father knows. He will provide. It is enough for Him to know His childrens needs, and He will be sure to provide for them.

31. But rather seek you the Kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Thrown in as a kind of make-weight. You get the spiritual and then the common blessings of life shall be added unto you.

32. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. That is your share. Others may have inferior joys, but you are to have the Kingdom of God! The Lord could not give you more than that and He will not give you less.

33. Sell that you have, and give alms. Do not merely give away what you can spare, but even pinch yourself, sometimes, and sell what you can that you may have the more to give.

33. Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts. Put some of your estate where it cannot be lost. Take care that you invest some of it for Gods poor, and Gods work, where the interest will be sure and the investment will be safe.

34. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. You can be sure of that. Your heart will go after your treasure and, if none of your treasure has gone to Heaven, none of your heart will go there, either.

35, 36. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and you yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately. Our Lord constantly reminded His disciples that the time would come when He must leave them for a season, but He always kept before them the thought of His return and bade them watch for Him as those that wait for their lord.

37-39. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. As he does not know when the thief will come, he is always watching.

40, 41. Be you therefore ready also: for the Son of Man comes at an hour when you think not. Then Peter said unto Him, Lord, speak You this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord told him that, while it was spoken to all, it had a very special bearing upon Apostolic men, upon preachers of the Gospel, ministers of Christ.

42-44. And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he has. Just as Pharaoh made Joseph ruler over all Egypt, so, when men have done well in the ministry of Christ, He will promote them, and they shall do still more for Him.

45, 46. But and if that servant says in his heart, My lord delays his coming, and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looks not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder. This is a truly terrible expression! We are sometimes charged with using too strong expressions with regard to the wrath to come. It is quite impossible that we should do so, even if we tried, for the expressions of the Lord Jesus are more profoundly terrible than any which even mediaeval writers have ever been known to invent!

46. And will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. The worst portion that any man can get is with the unbelievers! Are there not some here who may, in this verse, see what a dark doom theirs will be if they are among those who are described as being cut in sunder, and having their portion with the unbelievers?

47. And that servant, which knew his lords will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. So that there are different measures of responsibilitythere are degrees in guilt, and degrees in punishment.

48. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. O my Brothers and Sisters, let those of us who are privileged with the possession of the Gospel, and privileged with any amount of ability to spread it, enquire whether we could give in a good account if the Lord were to come tonight and summon us, as stewards, to give an account of our stewardship. God bless to us all the reading of His Word! Amen.

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FIRETHE NEED OF THE TIMES   
NO. 854

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 7, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! Luke 12:49.**

OUR Lord was here certainly alluding to the opposition and persecution which the Gospel would excite. This is clear from the context, in which He declares that He is not come to send peace on the earth but a sword, and from the parallel passages in the other Gospels, where our Lord is forewarning His disciples that they must look for persecution. Albeit, that this was the first direction of the Saviors thought, He here delivers Himself of a Truth of God of a far wider application and reveals a great peculiarity of the Gospel which causes men to oppose it. He bears witness that the Gospel is an ardent, fervent, flaming thinga subject for enthusiasm, a theme for intense devotion, a matter which excites mens souls and stirs them to the lowest depthsand for this reason, mainly, it arouses hostility.

If the Gospel were a mere propriety of ceremonies, a truth which would slumber in the creed or lie entombed in the brain. If it were not a spiritual principle which lays hold upon the innermost nature, rules the emotions and fires the affectionsif it were not all this it would remain unopposed. But because it is so living and forcible a principle, the powers of evil are in arms to stop its course. The subject then, of this mornings meditation will be the fiery nature of the religion of Jesus Christ! And to bring this clearly before you we shall first and foremost CONSIDER THE HISTORY OF THE GOSPEL.

Practically, so far as the most of us are concerned, it begins with a revelation contained in this Bookwe come to the Bible, therefore, to find out what the Gospel is. Bending over the pages we are struck with the extraordinary doctrines revealed. We find them far from being matters for the curious and the philosophical, but practical truths, touching upon everyday life and bearing upon common human nature. Truths, indeed, so powerful over humanity that they seem to wear the key of mans heart hanging at their belt. We find in this Book the master Truth of the love of God plainly and repeatedly stated.

Right golden are these words, God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. We see revealed to us a love of God so vast as to be incomprehensible! So generous as to be a theme for adoring wonder throughout eternity, since the Father gives up His equal Son that He may bleed and die that we, who are rebellious and undeserving, may live through Him! As we believe the doctrine of Divine love, we feel it to be a Truth which sets the soul on fire with joy, gratitude and love. As we peruse the Gospel, we perceive that Divine love has been manifested in connection with a most astonishing display of justice and severity towards sin.   
We see God willing to forgive, but not willing to allow His Law to be dishonored, and therefore giving up His only-begotten Son to die a death of pain and ignominy, in order that the penalty of a broken Law might be rendered to justice and yet mercy displayed to rebels! We behold the Savior bleeding on the tree as much to manifest the justice as the love of God. And now, as we behold our Lords passion, thoughts that burn full into our bosomholy detestation of sin lifts the torch of heart-searching and the flame of true love burns up our lusts. He dies, the Friend of Sinners dies! Murdered by human sin! Who will not, therefore, loathe the murderous thing? It is impossible to read aright in the illuminated volume of the Cross, printed in crimson characters, without feeling our hearts burn within us with an ardor unquenchable.

As we study more fully the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, we perceive that in consequence of the death of the Crucified and by reason of the love of God, eternal salvation by Divine Grace is freely proclaimed to everyone that believes in Christ! This creates, at first, a fire of opposition to the doctrine of Free Grace, given not for works of righteousness which we have done, but according to the decree of Godfor naturally we choose to be saved by our own goodness and we prefer, like Luther on Pilates staircase, to please ourselves with acts of humiliating penance rather than submit to that voice which says, By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified. Before long, through Gods Spirit, another fire burns in our soul of intense

gratitude that God should condescend to make a covenant with man and ordain faith in Jesus as the great way of obtaining reconciliation!

Brothers and Sisters, these three Truthsthe love of God, the atoning death of Christ and of justification by faithare doctrines which cannot sleep! They must be active! Like the sword of God, they cannot be quiet. They are a seed which must grow, a leaven which must spread, a fire which must burn on forever! Take any other Truth of the Gospel and you will find it to be of the same energetic characteras, for instance, that of the universal priesthood of all Believers. Priestcraft, throughout all its domains, is stirred to bitterest hate by this Truth of God. How cardinals and bishops gnash their teeth! How priests and friars revile this teaching, You are a royal priesthood!

This does away with the pride of a clerical castethe commerce in pardons and confessions. Every man who believes in Jesus Christ is at once a priest and as much a priest as any other of the saints, so that no man has any right to arrogate unto himself in particular the title of priest, or to suppose or imagine that there is any sacerdotal rank in the Church but such as is common to all Believers in Christ Jesus! This Truth of God coming into a mans soul makes him blaze and burn with zeal! Am I consecrated to God, ordained to stand as a priest between the living and the dead and to offer acceptable sacrifice through Jesus Christ? Then I will purge myself from uncleanness and diligently serve my God!

Am I and all my Brethren priests? asks the Believer. Then down with priestcraft! We will be no longer duped by pretenders who claim to be channels of Divine Grace and anointed dispensers of the Divine favor. If the Gospel of Jesus Christ had been a mystic philosophy which only a few could comprehend, it would not have been a matter of fire! If it had been a mere pompous bunch of ceremonies which the people could only look upon and admire, it would have had no ardent influence! If it had been a mere orthodoxy, to be learnt by heart and every jot and tittle to be accepted without consideration, or if it had been a mere law of civilities and legalities, a mere ordinance of propriety and rule and regulation, it would never have been what Christ says it is! But, inasmuch as it is a principle which affects the heart, which takes possession of our entire manhood, changes, renews, uplifts and inspires us, making us akin with God and filling us with the Divine fullness, it becomes in this world a thing of flame and fire, burning its way to victory! I came to send fire on the earth.

I have commenced the history of the Gospel with the Bible, but remember, the Gospel does not long remain a mere writingit is no sooner thoroughly read and grasped than the reader becomes, according to his ability, a preacher. We will suppose when a preacher whom God has truly called to the work, proclaims this Gospel, you will see for a second time that it is a thing of fire. Observe the man! If God has sent him, he is little regardful of the graces of oratory. He counts it sheer folly that the servants of God should be the mimics of Demosthenes and Cicero. He learns in another school how to deliver his Masters message. He comes forward in all sincerity, not in the wisdom of words, but with great plainness of speech and tells to the sons of men the great message from the skies!

The one thing of all others he abhors is to deliver that message with bated breath, with measured cadence and sentences that chill and freeze as they fall from ice-bound lips. He speaks as one who knows that God has sent himlike a man who believes what he says, and moreover, feels that his message is a burden on his own soula burden which he must be delivered froma fire within his bones which rages till he gives it vent, for woe is unto him if he preach not the Gospel! I would not utter too sweeping a sentence, but I will venture to say that no man who preaches the Gospel without zeal is sent of God to preach at all.

When I turn to sermons such as Blairs, so faultless and yet so lifeless, I wonder whether by any possibility a soul could have been converted under them! The absence of enthusiasm in a sermon is fatal! It is the lack of its essential element, the one thing necessary to raise the discourse above the level of a mere essay. In Whitefields sermons, of which we have but the rough notes, one perceives coals of juniper and hot thunderbolts which mark him out to be a true Boanerges. Mark, my Brethren, that the fire in the preacher sent of God is not that of mere excitement, nor that alone of an intelligent judgment acting upon the passions. No, but there is also a mysterious influence resting on Gods servants which is irresistible.

The Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven anoints all true evangelists and is the true power and fire. The more we believe in the Presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the more likely shall we be to see the Gospel triumphant in our ministry. Brethren, there is nothing in the Gospel, apart from the Spirit of God, which can win upon man, for man hates the Gospel with all his heart. Though the reasonableness of the Gospel of Jesus ought to make the belief of it universal, yet its plain dealing with human sin excites deadly antagonism, and, therefore, the Gospel itself would make no progress were it not for the Divine power. There is an invisible arm which pushes forward the conquests of the Truth of God! There is a fire unfed of human fuel which burns a way for the Truth of Jesus Christ into the hearts of men!

In tracing this history of the Gospel, I would have you observe the effect of the preaching of such a one as I have described. While he is delivering the Truth of God of a crucified Savior and bidding men repent of sin and believe in Christ. While he is pleading and exhorting with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, do you see the fire flakes descend in showers from on high? One of them has dropped just yonder and fallen into a heart that had been cold and hard beforeobserve how it melts all that was hard and iron-likeand tears begin to flow from channels long dried up! Can you hear the sobbing of that anxious one as she confesses her sins and asks for mercy? Do you notice the inward anguish of yonder youth who is convicted of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come and who is ready to cry out, What must I do to be saved?

Do you notice the opposite effect in another quarter? Yonder sinner has heard of Jesus and now believes in Him. Mark well the joy he feels! He is not like a man who has learned fresh mathematical truths of a cold, unemotional nature, but he is ready to clap his hands! He has as much as he can do to restrain himself, he feels so overjoyed! Do you observe that man who has now heard that Gospel for some few months? Do you notice that the fire still continues to burn within him? He gives to the cause of God what seems to others to be a lavish waste. He does for Christ what some would think to be a work of fanaticism. He is bold, he is in earnest, he is mighty in prayerhe is, in fact, consecrated, given up, devotedthe zeal of Gods House has eaten him up as it did the Psalmist, so that his meat and his drink is to do the will of Him that sent him. Herein you see the true character of the Gospel! Like fire it thaws the iceberg heart, it makes the iron flow forth to be molded into a Divine shape. It sets the sacrifice on a blaze and mans whole nature goes up in sacred smoke of gratitude and praise to the Most High!

And now, as surely as God glorifies His Truth and gives seals to the Christian ministry, opposition is aroused. If the preacher is supposed to live in the middle ages, his history will be told in a few words. He preaches at first to a crowd. Converts are made. The priests hear of it. He is abhorred and marked for extermination. He resorts to lone places among the hills. He preaches in cottages and private assembliesconverts are still brought in. The hunt grows hotter! The Hell hounds are out, eager for blood. The man is secreted. He takes his pen to write if he cannot use his tongue to speak. At last he is seized. He is dragged before the tribunals. He burns and blazes with sacred eloquence before his judges, but he is condemned to die.

And now he stands upon a fiery pulpit, the firewood blazing all around him! And, if he utters not a single word, yet his death is eloquent. The fire of his earnestness is met by the fire of their malicewe know which of the two fires will win the day! In these times we are screened by a gracious Providence from the Satanic cruelty of persecution. Nowadays it takes another shapethe preacher is no sooner successful than it is reported that he is actuated either by covetous or ambitious designs. It is also currently reported that he said this or that ridiculous or blasphemous thing. There are some who heard him say what he never dreamed of and others stand prepared to be godfathers to the lie and add another of their own invention. And so the slander flies abroad and opposition finds barbed shafts to fling at the too valiant champion.

Parties are made and sides taken for and againstand thus, again, is fulfilled the Masters sayingI came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. You may depend upon it, there is no good doing if Satan does not howl! When there is no opposition from the infernal powers, it is because there is nothing to oppose. Let them be, says Satan, let them be! A comfortable congregation, a sober ministerall asleeplet them be! Drive on! he says to his charioteer, I need not alight here. Another small congregationmore pews than peoplesleepy nothings! Drive on! he says, no trouble here for my empire. Drive on to yonder Meeting House where there is an earnest preacher and a people much given to prayer. Stop, he says, I must use my best endeavors to stop this invasion of my kingdom.

Straightway Satan comes to do his best or his worst to hinder the kingdom of Christ. In Hells opposition we discern a sign of hopefulness, for where that fire of malice burns against the Gospel there Gods fire of Divine Grace is burning, also! When the fire of conversion has kindled the fire of persecution, it proves its own infinite energy by subjecting even persecution to itself. That famous master in Israel and servant of God, Farel, the Swiss Divine, was converted to God by the sight of a martyr burnt in one of the streets of Paris. The wonderful demeanor of the saint as he stood in the midst of the fire to die, made an impression on his youthful spirit which was never afterwards shaken off.

It has often been through opposition that the Church has made her greatest advances. Hence partly the reason for our Lords saying, How I wish it were already kindled! as if our Lord had meant, What does My kingdom care if opposition comes? Let it come! It is so fruitful a thing to the Church of God, that the sooner it shall come the better! We might almost say, today, if there could be a return to the persecutions of the past, if it were not for the sin which would be caused, How I wish it were already kindled!

The Christian man who is slandered and opposed can afford to smile with a sacred contempt at all that can be done against the Gospel of Christ. It was during the persecution which raged against the saints at Jerusalem that the Church obtained one of the greatest pillars that have ever strengthened and adorned her fabricI mean the Apostle Paul. Breathing out threats against the people of God, he is on the road to Damascus, but the blaze of heavenly fire blinds him, strikes him to the ground and afterwards he becomes a chosen vessel to carry, like an uplifted cresset, that very fire throughout the nations of the earth!

I look, Brothers and Sisters, for recruits to the Truth of God from the ranks of our enemies. Never despair, the brightest preacher of Christ may yet be fashioned out of the wretched raw material of Roman Catholic and Anglican priests! In politics, one of the leaders of reform has come to us from the hostile partyand we may expect in religious matters to see the same, or even more wonderful enlightenments! A monk reformed Germany! A parish priest was the morning star of Englands day of light! The Lord can send out His warrant to arrest a ringleader in the army of Satan and to say to him, You shall be no more against Me. You are Mine. Enlist beneath My banner and from this day be a champion for the Truth which you have despised.

Never let us fear! The fire of God which Christ has cast among us shall go on to burn, let man do what he will to quench it! Thus I have given you a very brief abstract of the history of the Gospel from the Bible and the man, to the convert and the persecution, until opposition, valiantly met, yields up its spoils.

II. Secondly, LET US STUDY MORE CAREFULLY THE QUALITIES OF THE GOSPEL AS FIRE. First, fire and the Gospel are notable for spiritual purity. The most refined form of idolatry that has ever existed has been the Parsee worship of fire. There is a kind of sentiment connected with the sun, the great parent of light and fire, which casts a halo around the error which it cannot excuse. Behold the enlightening flame, so immaterial, so spiritual, so akin to spiritbehold it and see to what the Gospel may be compared!

God Himself, though He has no earthly likeness, has been pleased to say of Himself, that He is a consuming fire, fire being as instructive a symbol of God as earth can afford. The Gospel is like fire because it is so pure a thingthere is no admixture of error or unholiness in it. Fire has little of earth. It has no dross. It is a simple element, I was about to say, but what it is no man knows. We scarcely can put it among the component parts of this material earth, it is so pure. Even so, the Gospel is very pure, like silver purified seven times, free from every earthly alloy. Moreover, it is exceedingly spiritual, so spiritual that few understand it. Yes, none but those to whom it is given of the Father. It is but the spiritual man, enlightened of the Spirit of God, who receives of the things which are of God.

It is so different from the trash of Rome! It talks not of the material flesh of Christ as if it could literally dwell in bread and wine! It talks not of aqueous regeneration worked by drops of water! It never consecrates holy places, or imputes holiness to material substances. It declares that God is a Spirit and that they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. The Altar of Christianity is the Person of an unseen Savior. The offering of Christianity is prayer and praise. The worship of Christianity is the uprising of the heartit is not at all a matter for the eyes and hands and nostrilsbut altogether spiritual, sublime, elevated, pure, God-like.

Happy are they who have accepted a spiritual and perfect Gospel! The Gospel is like fire, again, because of its cheering and comforting influence. He that has received it finds that the cold of this world no longer pinches him. He may be poor, but the Gospels fire takes away the chilliness of poverty. He may be sick, but the Gospel gives his soul to rejoice even in the bodys decay. He may be slandered and neglected, but the Gospel honors him in the sight of God. The Gospel, where it is fully received into the heart, becomes a Divine source of matchless consolation. Fire, in addition to its warmth, gives light. The flaming beacon guides the mariner or warns him of the rocks. The Gospel becomes to us our guide through all the darkness of this mortal life. And if we cannot look into the future, nor know what shall happen to us tomorrow, yet by the light of the Gospel we can see our way in the present path of duty, yes, and see our end in future immortality and blessedness! Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Brothers and Sisters, I need not enlarge here, because your lives are a daily homily upon this subject. You bear about with you this heavenly flame. It is this which cheers and guides you. You have, day by day, found that godliness with contentment is great gain. You have learned to rejoice in the Lord always and to be happy in the favor of the Most High, in the salvation of Jesus and in the consolation of the blessed Comforter. Thus do you show to others that Christ has sent fire upon the earth.

A third likeness between the Gospel and fire is its testing qualities. No test like fire. That piece of jewelry may seem to be gold. The color is an exact imitation. You could scarcely tell but what it was the genuine metal. Yes, but the melting pot will prove allput it into the crucible and you will soon see. Thus in this world there are a thousand things that glitter, things which draw admirers that are advocated in the name of philanthropy and philosophy and I know not what beside. But it is amazing how different the schemes of politicians and the devices of wise men appear when they are once put into the refining pot of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Despotic rulers and kings are very wise to try and keep the Gospel out of their dominions, for if they have anything crooked in the statute book, the Gospel is sure to show it! If there is anything rotten in the foundations of the government, there is nothing like a preached Gospel to discover and unveil it!

What is the reason, today, that we enjoy such precious liberties in this realm? Liberties which I venture to say are not excelled by those possessed by any people under Heavenwhat has been the groundwork of our freedom, but thisthat the Gospel preached among us, evermore like a fire, is testing and trying everything in our institutions and that which is not right is sure in the end to give way! Much which now stands, but is not according to the Masters will, is marked to be consumedand thank God it is sofor we shall be all the better for the overthrow of moss-grown injustice and wrong. The Gospel proves all things and is the great ultimate test as to right and wrong.

Ah, how the fire of the Gospel will test a mans heart. Many a man thinks he carries something good within him and he wraps himself up in the robes of his own righteousness until the Gospel comesand then he finds that he is naked and poor and miserable! Many a professor imagines that he is serving God and doing welluntil, in the Gospel fire, his wood, hay and stubble vanish in smoke! All through this world of ours, the Gospel will burn up with unquenchable fire everything that is evil, and leave nothing but that which is just and true. Of all things under Heaven, the most intolerant is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What, you ask, intolerant? Yes, I say, intolerant! The Gospel enables us to proclaim liberty of conscience to all men! The Gospel wields no temporal sword. It asks for no cannon balls to open the gates of a nation for its ministry. The true Gospel prepares no dungeon and no rack. It asks not Peters sword to cut off Malchus earbut while it gives freedom from all bondage, it demands obedience to itself!

Within its own realm its power is absolute! Its arguments cut and kill error! Its teachings lay low every proud hope and expose every false way! The Gospel is merciful to the sinner, but merciless to sin! It will not endure evil, but wars against it to overturn it and to set up a throne for Him whose right it is to reign. The Gospel of Jesus Christ will never join hands with infidelity or Popery! It will never enter into league with idolatry! It cannot be at peace with error! False religions can lie down, side by side with one another, for they are equally a lie and there is a brotherhood between thembut the true religion will never rest until all superstitions are utterly exterminated and until the banner of the King eternal, immortal, invisible, shall wave over every mosque and minaret, temple and shrine! Fire cannot be made tolerant of that which can be consumedit will burn the stubble until the last particle is gone and the Truth of God is of the same kind.

A further parallel between the Gospel and fire lies in their essential aggressiveness. Take a few live coals, put them down in a wheat stack or corn rick and tell the fire, I have given you a bundle of straw to burn. Now burnburn away to your hearts content, for that straw is yours. But you must go no furtherburn with propriety and within bounds. Do not begin making sparks and flames, for we will have none of your fierce attacks. While you are thus talking in this senseless way, the fire has blazed up vehemently, burning the materials surrounding it and if you do not take to your heels you will probably be consumed yourself!

Fire is not to be talked to in that way. It knows nothing about moderation and keeping to itself. Have I not often heard this kind of theory laid down: You religionists have your own liberty. Keep yourselves respectable and quiet and enjoy yourselves, but leave other people alone. You have no business to be propagandists, compassing sea and land to make proselytes. Why fall into fanaticism? Sit still, now. You have cushioned seats be comfortable upon them. The minister has his stipend and his pulpit let him mind his own congregationit will be as much as he can do if he pleases his own disciples. Why must a man become a firebrand, bigotedly intruding his peculiar views where they are not wanted?

Yes, that is just what the world desired in Christs day, no doubt. Idolaters would have been satisfied if Christianity had kept itself to the handful of disciples which Christ had gathered. Christians might have been ridiculed at first, but by degrees they would have cooled down into a respectable sect like the Pharisees and Sadducees, especially after those uneducated fishermen had died out and some respectable tradesmen in Jerusalem and, perhaps, a squire or two from beyond Jordan had joined the community.

But Christianity did not happen to be a thing that would so soon be frozen. The Gospel of Jesus was a thing of fire! Jerusalem, alone, would not serve its purpose. All Judea and Galilee could not escape from it

*More and more the kingdom grows,*

*Ever mighty to prevail.*   
Asia Minor is set upon a blaze by that fanatical firebrand, Saul of Tarsus, and even that is not enough! The fire burns so fiercely in Asia that the sparks fly across the Bosphorus! Paul is working in Macedonia. He is heard of in Athens, he is talked about in Corinthand even that is not enoughthat restless soul must cross the sea and is found in Rome thundering at the gates of Caesars palace! Right away in Spain the new religion is gaining ground. Proconsuls, what are you doing? The gods of Rome defied in far-off Spain?

No, the emissaries have crossed beyond Gaul into the savage land of Britain! They have dared to stand in Albion and proclaim the name of Him that was crucified! Will they never rest? Let us torture them! Rack them! Shut them up in prison! But look!they come to the tribunals eagerly, and confess themselves Christians with enthusiasm! Pliny writes home to know what is to be done with these people who seem so anxious to die! Well, bring them into the amphitheatre! Fling them to the wild beasts! Let the bears and lions see what they can do with them! Make them die a gladiators death amidst the shouts of Romes matrons and senators!

It does not stop them, Sir. They have entered the senate! They have disciples among the patricians! The name of Christ was spoken the other day right in the midst of the senate to the Emperors own face! Yes! They even say that there are some high in rank and of imperial blood who worship the Crucified! Yes, and as years roll on, you priests of Jupiter and Saturn, listen to the tale and be astonishedyour gods are rolled away from their pedestals! You who are called Pontiff and Pontifex Maximus all you are sent awayyour temples are turned into churches and your places where idolatry reigned supreme become the assembling houses of the saints of the living God!

Will this Gospel of Christ ever stop? Will it not pause today? No, Sirs, it never will, nor can! The true religion of Jesus Christ is essentially warlike. As the heathens spoke of Minerva leaping armed from the head of Jove, so did the religion of Christ spring armed from the very heart of Jesus Christ and it stands in the midst of the world an enemy of all unrighteousness! It is the foe of all oppression, the friend of the poor and needy and the enemy of everything that is at enmity to God! You are no Christian if such is not your Christianity, for Jesus Christ brought not a slumbering faith, but fire onto the earth!

Our religion is like fire, again, because of its tremendous energy and its rapid advance. Who shall be able to estimate the force of fire? Our forefathers standing on this side the river, as they gazed many years ago upon the old city of London wrapped in flame, must have wondered with great astonishment as they saw cottage and palace, church and hall, monument and cathedral all succumbing to the tongues of flame. It must be an amazing sight, if one could safely see it, to behold a prairie rolling along in great sheets of flame, or to gaze upon Vesuvius when it is spouting away at its utmost force. When you deal with fire you cannot calculateyou are among the imponderables and the immeasurable. I wish we thought of that when we are speaking of religion. You cannot calculate concerning its spread.

How many years would it take to convert the world? asks somebody. Sir, it need not take 10 minutes, if God so willed itbecause as fire, beyond all reckoning, will sometimes, when circumstances are congenial, suddenly break out and spreadso will the Truth of God. Truth is not a mechanismand does not depend upon engineering. A thought in one mind, why not the same thought in fifty? That thought in 50 minds, why not in fifty thousand? The Truth of God which affects a village and stirs it from end to endwhy not a town, a citywhy not a nation? Why not all nations? God may, when He wills it, bring all human minds into such a condition that one single text such as this, This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, may set all hearts on a blaze!

Vainly do we reckon the missionary costs so much, and only so many can, therefore, be sent! Yes, but God works most by weakest means full often and sometimes achieves by His poorest saints works which He will not perform by those who have every visible appliance. Perhaps no men have ever been more useful than the Moravians, yet what poor men the Moravians have always been! How inadequate their means, yet they make it their lives duty to propagate the Truth of God as it is in Jesus in every land and God is with them! The Lord has but to stir up the Church in England to a proper sense of her duty and endow her with confidence in Christ and a conviction that God is about to bless her, and you and I, before these hairs shall be gray, may see such sights as we would not have believed though a man should tell it unto us!

I can believe anything about fire. Let a man tell me that in a house just now a bundle of rags have begun to burn. Let him tell me in five minutes that the shop is on fire. Let him tell me in five minutes more that it is blazing through the shutters, or that the next story is burning, or that the roof is coming in, I could believe it all! Fire can do anything! And so with the Gospel of Jesusgiven but an earnest preacher, given but the Truth of God fully declared! Given an earnest people determined to propagate the Gospel and I can understand a nation converted to God, yes, and all the nations of the earth suddenly shaken with the majesty of the Truth of God!

Once more, the Gospel resembles fire in this, that it will ultimately prevail. It is clearly revealed in Scripture that as the world was once destroyed by water, it will a second time be destroyed by fire. Perhaps they are correct who tell us that the center of the earth is all a molten mass and we dwell but upon the cool crust of it. Perhaps it may be so, that these great volcanoes are the ventilators of subterranean fires. But surely is it predestined that earth and all the works that are in it shall be burnt up, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Fire will win the day! Old ocean, you may roll on in your pride and laugh at fire, but fire will lick you up with its tongues of flame! Men, you may erect your machinery with which to protect your cities, but there shall not be a wreck of all your cities left!

Like old Babels tower, of which only a heap of dust and ruins remains, your pompous cities shall utterly vanish away! So with the Gospel. The seas of iniquity may slow, for awhile, the fire of the Gospel from spreading, but that sea shall be utterly removed by the energy of Divine Truth. The day shall come when the fire of the Gospel shall make the whole world to be a burnt-offering unto the Lord Most High! Let us have courage! Let us look forward to the flight of time and expect the advent of our Masterfor the day shall come when He shall reign from the river even to the ends of the earth! And from sea and land, from mountain and valley there shall come up the universal song, Hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.

III. Lastly, if the Gospel is thus like fire, LET US CATCH THE FLAME! If this fire shall really burn within us, we shall become from this very moment fearless of all opposition. That retired friend will lose the strings which bind his tonguehe will feel that he must speak as God shall bid him. Or if he cannot speak, he will act with all his might in some other way to spread abroad the savor of Immanuels name! That coward who hid his head and would not own his profession, when the fire burns, will feel that he had rather court opposition than avoid it. There may be some young man here who is about to take up his crossit has come to this he must decide which it shall be. Let him do so without fear, for the Master whom he serves will bear him through all opposition!

The fondest relationship which can be lost by our decision for Christ shall be more than made up for us by the union which it cements with Jesus Himself. Better that we lost every friend and all our kinsfolk and had the bad word of all the neighborhood, than that we lost the love of God which passes knowledge. Cast in your lot, dear Friends, with Christ, and fling down the gauntlet to the world! Let them say their worst. Let them howl, let them bark, yes, let them bitelittle shall it matter to the man to whom persecution has become an occasion for rejoicingbecause now is he made like unto the Prophets which were before him!

If we catch this flame, we shall, after having defied all opposition, tire utterly of the mere proprieties of religion which at this present time crush down like a nightmare the mass of the religious world. Do you believe that if Jesus Christ came into this world He would call nine-tenths of our modern religion the Christianity which He preached? Is it the least bit like His own zeal? Many think that all the faith Christianity requires is to put on your best things on Sunday and go to your place of worship with your Bible or hymn-book, or prayer-book. Then you sit there decorously and look at other peoples bonnets and dresses. And then you come home again!

Others think it is sufficient to listen to the sermon discreetly, perhaps making a few observations upon the discourse, perhaps making none because there is not enough in the sermon to be a peg to hang a remark upon! The religion of many professors is nothing more than thatif it is hardly that. Do you not know of people who believe the articles and do not doubt them because they never think of them? They have packed them away in the iron safe, with their title deeds which they feel so sure about that they do not care to read them. They are orthodox, but they feel no power in their own souls produced by these Truths of God! They feel no depression because the Truth of God convicts them of sin. There is no exhilaration because the Truth shows them their safety in Christ.

Many, if they get to a supposed saving faith, get no farther. They are saved themselves and that seems to be all they care about. Their neighbors in the next pew may be damned, but what do they care? All down the street in which they live there may be scarcely a person attending a place of worship, but what business is that of theirs? They belong to the denomination of Cainthey say, Am I my brothers keeper? Such men have denied the faith! The selfishness which reigns supreme in them is as antichristian as even covetousness, or adultery, or murder could be! The spirit of Christianity is unselfishness and love to others, care of others souls, a devotedness to the increase of the Masters kingdom.

O Brothers and Sisters, it is sickening work to think of your cushioned seats, your chants, your anthems, your choirs, your organs, your gowns and your bands, and I know not what besides, all made to be instruments of religious luxury, if not of pious amusement, while you need far more to be stirred up and incited to holy ardor for the propagation of the Truth of God as it is in Jesus! One would think Christ came into the world to administer an opiate to the sons of men, or prepare down for all sleepers! But instead of it He came to send fire on the earthand where His true Gospel is, it is a fire that will not rest and be quiet amidst mere proprieties and rounds of performances.

If we catch this fire, we shall not only become dissatisfied with mere proprieties, but we shall, all of us, become instant in prayer. Day and night our soul will go up with cries and moans to God, O God, how long, how long, how long? Will You not avenge Your own elect? Will not Your Gospel prevail? Why are Your chariots so long in coming? Why does not Christ reign? Why is not the Truth triumphant? Why do You suffer idolatry to rule and priestcraft to reign? Make haste, O God, grasp Your twoedged sword and strike and let error die and let Truth win the victory! It is thus we shall be always pleading if this fire burns in our spirits.

This will lead us to eager service. Having this fire in us, we shall be trying to do all we can for Christ. We shall never think we have done enough! We shall be uneasy if for a moment we rest! We shall seek, if possible, to snatch souls from the burningto preach Christ where He is not known and to bring Him fresh jewels for His crown. Brethren, this is a large Church, numbering now nearly 4,000 souls and if you grow cold and lose your earnestness, I would sooner have 40 warm-hearted men and women than the whole multitude of you if you are chilled! For what are you who are cold and indifferent but a clog upon the chariot? What are you but like the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt? Sin begins among you, but no strength do you minister to the Lords host.

The warm-hearted, earnest, thorough Christian is the life of the Church! And if we cannot all be as we would, may the fiery spirits among us never be retarded by those who are more lethargic. May they live above the influences that would drag them down! May we never be content to do as much as others, to pray as much as others, to give as much as othersbut may it be our resolve that we will outstrip allnot out of any emulation, but out of a love to Him who has done so much, forgiven so much, secured so much, promised so much to us who are His people!

O lovers of Christ, come and bow at His feet and ask Him to let His love supply you with fire this morning! Come to the Pierced One! Gaze upon the crown of thorns! Look into the hole which the soldiers spear has made! Gaze into the nail prints and say unto your soul

*Now, for the love I bear His name,   
What was my gain I count my loss.   
My former pride I call my shame   
And nail my glory to His Cross.   
Yes, and I must and will esteem   
All things but loss for Jesus sake.   
O may my soul be found in Him,   
And of His righteousness partake.*

God bless you for Christ Jesus sake. Amen.   
*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONLuke 12:13-53.*   
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #1135 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SIGNS OF THE TIMES   
NO. 1135

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 5, 1873, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And He said also to the people, When you see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway you say, There comes a shower; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, There will be heat; and it comes to pass. You hypocrites, you can discern the face of the sky and of   
the earth; but how is it that you do not discern this time? Yes, and why even of   
yourselves judge you not what is right?   
Luke 12:54-57.**

THESE words were addressed by our Savior to the common people who had gathered around Him. He appealed to their common sense. They were able to foretell the weather from the signs which they saw in the heavens and if they could do this, the signs of His coming were even more clear and manifest, so that if they would but use their eyes they might see that He was the Messiah. That they did not do so was an instance of hypocrisy of heartthey did not see the Savior because they would not. Our Saviors coming had been very clearly foretold by the Prophets. The people were generally acquainted with the Prophetic writings and there had been, consequently, a general expectation of the coming of the Messiah at the time. Above all, the scepter had departed from Judah and they knew by this sure signal that the set time for the coming of Shiloh had arrived.

Beyond this, our Saviors Character and miracles attested His Messiahship, for He worked among the people such works as no other man had ever done and taught them with a Divine authority which they could not resist. Did not the blind see? Did not the deaf hear? Did not the lame walk? Were not lepers cleansed and the dead raised? And was not the Gospel preached to the poor? What other tokens could they ask? Were not these the ensigns which their great Prophet, Isaiah, had left on record for their guidance? As certainly as a cloud in the western sky predicted rain and a wind from the south was the sign of heat, so assuredly there were infallible tokens, visible to all who chose to see them, that the Messiah had come!

He charges them to use their common sense and not submit themselves to be hoodwinked by their leaders. He asked, Judge you not even of yourselves what is right? Why bow yourselves down that scribes and Pharisees may go over you? Think and judge for yourselves like men! The Lord, here, declares the duty of private judgment and exhorts the people to use it, urging them to yield no more a slavish obedience to the mandates of their false leaders, but to use their own wits as they would upon

ordinary mattersand even of themselves judge what was right. The people needed awakening from spiritual slumber. They required to be exhorted to manliness of spirit, for they had so completely surrendered their judgments to their blind leaders that the most conspicuous signs of the time were unperceived by them.

I believe that the passage before us might have been spoken by our Lord at the present moment with quite as much appropriateness as when He spoke it then, and therefore have I taken it for a text, hoping that, perhaps, God might bless it to this crooked and perverse generation which scorns the yoke of Christ, but willingly bows its neck to the thralldom of a loathsome priestcraft! First, we shall consider our own times, religiously, on a broad scale. And then, secondly, we shall speak of the times within the little world of ourselves, and both to Believers and unbelievers we shall have to say, You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that you do not discern this time? Yes, and why even of yourselves judge you not what is right?

I. First, then, let us carefully CONSIDER THE RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF OUR OWN AGE. At the outset, it must be evident to every Christian man and woman that the times are sadly darkened with superstition. The eastern sky is generally cloudless and when a cloud was seen to arise from the Mediterranean, which lay to the west, the Jews, very naturally, looked for rain, and it came. Innumerable clouds have arisen in these latter days, to the surprise and alarm of all lovers of our nation. Popery, which we thought to be dead and buried, as far as England was concerned, has displayed wonderful signs of vitality and has come back to usnot as a foreign plant, but as a home-grown upas treenurtured upon the fattest soil of our country in the enclosure of the National Church.

The clouds of Sacramentarianism, priestcraft, and idolatry are hanging over our nation like a pall. The heavens are darkened by their shadow. When clouds cover the sky we look for showers and we may rest assured that the almost universal tendency of our countrymen towards Popery forebodes evil. Idolatry in a nation always brings down upon it the judgments of God. Look at the pages of history and see whether any onceenlightened nation has ever set up idol gods, Virgin Marys, saints, holy wafersand followed the superstitions of Antichristwithout sooner or later being chastened of the Lord. Remember the glories of Spain under Ferdinand and Isabella! See what a nation it was in old times and what it has now become! Priestcraft is the Delilah through whose means the Spanish Samson has been shorn of his strength!

Read the story of France and all her late trials, and see if the great bane of the land has not been superstition and the unbelief which is the recoil from it. What good can come to a nation whose peasants are the dupes of the priests and whose statesmen are servile to the Pontiff of Rome? Have the Jesuits ever laid their hands upon a throne without eventually shaking it to its foundations? Have they ever secured power among a people without demoralizing them to the uttermost? Are they not the common enemies of mankind? Are they not a thousand times more dangerous to men than wolves or serpents? And is not their religion, whether it takes the Roman or the Anglican shape, under all its disguises, the abomination of desolation, provoking God beyond measure wherever it comes?

They bring in its train that bestial, or rather, devilish thing, the confessional, with all the shameless vice and infamous uncleanness of which it is both mother and nurse! It was but yesterday I read a little book for the young, edited by a committee of clergy of the Church of England, in which children are urged to confess to the priestmeaning, thereby, the parish clergymanevery immodest word they may have spoken and every indecent act they may have committed! They are taught, thus, to repeat filthiness and to become unblushing in vice. The young girl is told to confess to a man every sin against purity and modesty, and she is told, (and I will quote the very words), that, however painful it is to acknowledge a fault of this kind, it must be bravely confessed, without lessening it. It is almost always sins of impurity that weak penitents dare not tell in confession. That is to say, young women have a natural shame about them and the object of the confessional is to make their faces brazen enough to speak of immoral acts in the ear of a man!

This black cloud which hovers over my country warns of great evil to her. As surely as Spain and France have been humbled, and as nation after nation has crumbled down to anarchy, or been altogether destroyed, so surely will this land sink from her greatness and lose her rank among the nations if this deadly evil is not, by some means, stamped out! May God in His infinite mercy take up the gage of battle and go forth and fight His foes on this soil which is wet with the blood of martyrs and still glows with the fires of Smithfield! Oh, children of God, I pray you, discern the times before the threatening shower descends upon our country! And learn to play your parts as men of God, ordained to defend the Truth of God.

What is your duty at the present crisis? It is clearly your business to walk constantly in separation from everything which savors of the abominations of Rome! I do not see this among my fellow Christians and therefore I am ashamed and grieved at heart. I observe among many evangelical churchmen an increased leaning to ritualistic practices they are even are tinctured with this gall and show it by evident tokens. I see, also, among those who claim to be furthest apart from sacerdotalism, namely, Nonconformistsmany leaning in the direction we have indicated. Their buildings are growing more ornate and are pitiful mimicries of the ecclesiastical architecture most congenial to Popery. More and more are they studying to attract, by music, chants and sham liturgies. The Meeting House is now a Church, and in the Church the simplicity of Scriptural worship is overlaid with the inventions of human wisdom.

I hate sensuous worship quite as much in a Meeting House as in a cathedral, and rather more. But I see many of my Brethren eager after it and gradually introducing it, as the people will bear it. Again may it be said,

And so we went towards Rome. It is the imperative duty of every Christian man to say decisively, I will have no union with this abomination! I declare for God, for Christ, for His Truthand to this vile Antichrist I will not yield the smallest point! I will not be a sharer of Babylons sins, lest I be a partaker of her plagues. Happy are those who have not the mark of the beast either on their hands or on their foreheads, but keep the simple way of spiritual worship. In evil times they will feel the same quietude of conscience as Job did when he could say that he had never been enticed to adore the sun or the moon, or to kiss his hand in imitation of the worshippers of the hosts of Heaven.

Watchfully and earnestly should we avoid all communion with the great apostasy. It is also high time for us all, as Christians, to work more carefully in precise obedience to the Word of God. Brothers and Sisters, we should never have had the errors of Rome back among us if the Book of Common Prayer had been, from the first, conformed to the Word of God. There were temporizers abroad of old who gained a present peace for themselves by leaving to their descendants a heritage of error. We need to return to the pure Word of God. Conform the Church to the Scriptures and quicken her with Gods Spirit, and she will resist the encroachments of error. But fetter her with compromises and she will become captive to falsehood before long.

Luther did grand service by his Reformation, but he stopped half-way he left the Church with her face half-washedand in consequence her whole visage has again become foul. O for a thorough reformation! So long as words stood in the Anglican Prayer Book which, to the common reader, taught baptismal regeneration, they were an invitation and an encouragement to the Popish party to return! And having returned, they are, for them, a castle and high tower! I shall give great offense as I now go further and say, as in the sight of God, that I am persuaded that so long as infant baptism is practiced in any Christian Church, Popery will have a door set wide open for its return. It is one of those nests which must come down, or the foul birds will build in it again. We must come to the Law and to the Testimony, and any ordinance which is not plainly taught in Scripture must be put away!

As long as you give Baptism to an unregenerate child, people will imagine that it must do the child good, for they will ask, If it does not do it any good, why is it baptized? The statement that it puts children into the Covenant, or renders them members of the visible Church, is only a veiled form of the fundamental error of Baptismal Regeneration. If you keep up the ordinance, you will always have men superstitiously believing that some good comes to the baby thereby, and what is this but sheer Popery? Since the child cannot understand what is done, any good which it receives must come to it after the occult manner so much in vogue with the superstitiousis it any wonder that Popish beliefs grow out of it? And not only as to infant Baptism, but as to every other doctrine, ordinance, or preceptwe must each seek to get back to this Book and follow closely the Word of God.

The Wesleyan, the Presbyterian, the Baptist, the Independent, the Episcopalian must each be eager to put away everything, however esteemed among them, which is founded upon denominational tradition and not upon Inspired Authority. To the Law and to the Testimony must the Church of God return if she would escape future outbreaks of the AntiChristian evil. Great errors spring from lesser errors. To favor falsehood is to injure Truth. God give to His people to feel that the utmost care becomes them in obeying the Lord and walking after His commands, lest evil come of negligence. And, dear Brothers and Sisters, as the voice of this evil abounds, let us abound in our testimony to the Truth of God as it is in Jesus! The more the priests set up their idols, the more let us lift up Christ and Him Crucified! The more they compass sea and land to make proselytes, the more earnestly let us plead with men that they will believe in the true Savior. Let the diligence of our enemies shame our indolence let their earnestness rebuke our lethargy! Let us abundantly distribute the antidote while they industriously disseminate the poisonlet us pour out light and so scatter their darkness. This is Gods message to us and let every Christian man and woman read it in the signs of the times.

Furthermore, anyone with half an eye can see that a parching wind of unbelief is sweeping over the churches. Where superstition does not rule, skepticism has fixed its seat. When you see the south wind blow, you say there will be heatthis was a well-known weather sign among the Jews, for the south wind blew from the desert, like a blast from the mouth of a furnace. Even so, there will be a burning up of spiritual life wherever the wind of infidelity speeds its course. Alas, in how many of our pulpits are the great Truths of the Gospel kept back and regarded as mere platitudes, unfit for men of culture to repeat! These Truths of God may be believed in by the preacher, but he treats them as worn-out truisms. There are many ministers, nowadays, whom it would be premature to condemn, but whom it is unavoidable to suspect. They profess, by their very position, to be preachers of the Gospel, but their indistinct utterance upon vital points leads us to question whether they know anything of the Truth in their own souls, or do really and heartily believe any

one of the articles of our faith. These are the men who cry up freedom of thought and denounce all dogmas and creeds.

Knowing this to be the case, and we do know it, for we cannot look abroad without seeing it on all sides, is there not a voice to us out of this evil? When unbelief abounds in the churches, is it not time for true Believers to have done with all reliance upon human wisdom? Gradually the churches have a thicket to look upon of clever preachers, intellectual gentlemen, men of thought, great thinkers and the like, as the necessity of the times, and they have idolized them. And, now, what have these intellectual gentlemen done for their churches? To what have the men of thought brought their brethren? Our churches under men who preached

Jesus Christ and nothing else were the bulwarks of Protestantism, and no dissenters deserted to the foe. But under the care of these wonderful thinkers, the rich among Nonconformists see their families hurrying off to the superstitions which their fathers abhorred!

It has come to this, that in one of the conferences about to be held there is a paper to be read upon the Infrequency of Conversions in the Churches, a paper grievously needed. The Lord grant that the words spoken on the subject may burn like flames of fire! Who could expect conversions to be worked under many of the sermons which are now preached? I once heard a sermon, most philosophic and metaphysical, which was prefaced by a prayer that God would convert sinners by it, a prayer which seemed a sarcasm upon the discourse! We have had enough of intellectualism and oratorical polishlet them both be thrown out of window, as Jezebel was, with her painted cheeksand let something better take their placeeven the plain preaching of Christ Crucified!

Since there is such infidelity abroad, is it not time for Christians to rise above the atmosphere of doubt and walk in the light of God? If you merely attain to the theory of religion you may always live in question as to every Truth of God. But if you rise above the theory, and walk with God continually, doubts will vanish. I never doubt whether there is a sun when it shines on me and makes me warm. I can never doubt the existence of bread when I am eating it. He who feels the life of God gets beyond the reach of philosophic questioning which is the very atmosphere of the age. Brothers and Sisters, you will not question whether prayer is a reality if every day you receive answers to your petitions! You will never doubt the Atonement of Jesus Christ, or His Deity, if sin is your daily grief and Jesus your abiding Companion. You will look the scoffers of the age in the face and say to them, Get away from me! Our eyes have seen, our ears have heard and our hands have handled of the good Word of Life.

When we have this faith, let us battle with the unbelief of others. The voice of God is to you, O Believers, Arise, and let your faith exhibit itself. When Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord? then was the moment for Moses to cast down his rod and let it become a serpent. And when Jannes and Jambres cast down their rods and they became serpents, too, then was the opportunity for Moses rod to swallow up their rods! In proportion to the unbelief of the age ought to be the energy of Gods saints in working wonders of faith! Do and dare for God, my Brethren! Be bold for Him! Outcry the clamor of the multitudeput it down with the strong voice which proclaims, There is a God in Israel, and men shall hear it, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. Men of faith, gird on your harness and use the strength of God to oppose the strength of unbelief.

Again, is it not clear to every observer who watches this age, that religious apathy abounds? Like that lull which heralds the tempest, a dead calm rests over many of the churches just now. And what is the voice of the terrible sleep of Death but this, O you that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest till He awakens His Church? In your private prayers, I charge you, O men of God, make your wrestling with the Most High far more intense. While the Church sleeps, be on your watchtower. Neither day nor night refrain from supplicating God to arise and bless His Zion. Meanwhile, the Churches which are awake should, in their assemblies for prayer, be more importunate in their pleading. Come together, every one of you, in the time appointed for prayer and cry mightily unto God, for who knows, He might turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind? Now, beyond all times gone by, there is solemn need for supplication. See, my Brethren, that you abound in it.

These times of lethargy require something of us besides prayer, namely, personal activity. I would charge each Christian to be doing everything that he can for his Lord, for his Church and for perishing sinners. Let each man do his own work in Gods sight and in Gods strengtheach one taking care that the Church does not suffer through any neglect on his part. Personal consecration is the demand of the age. These days of lethargy are times when living saints should feel intensely for sinners, when they should feel for them an anguish and an agony. In proportion as others grow callous, we must become sensitive. If ever we are to see better times, they must come through the intense earnestness of each separate Believer crying out in pain for the souls of menas one that travails in birthtill men are saved from everlasting burning.

May each Christian here feel this sacred anguish and in addition may there be more intense and vigorous religious life in all. If we want to awaken others, we must be awake ourselves! If we would urge the Church forward, we must quicken our pace! If we would stimulate a laggard Church, we must, ourselves, throw our whole soul into the cause of God! Personal consecration, deepened daily, is the nearest way to promote the quickening of the entire Church of God to a sense of her high calling. May the Holy Spirit invigorate us to the full force of Grace that we may be the means of awakening the whole Church!

Once again, there is another sad sign of the times which the watchman must sorrowfully report. There is an evident withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from this land. The spots where God is blessing the Word are few and far between. A man may count them on his hand. Where is the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit as in days gone by? Our fathers were known to tell us of the days of Whitfield and Wesley, when the Gospel spread as fire running among the stubble, for mens minds seemed prepared to obey the impulses of Gods Spirit. We, ourselves, have seen something of these visitations. And in this place they have been almost continuous. But take the bulk of the churches all round and where is the Spirit of God at this time? Where are the converts that fly as a cloud? The earth has her harvest, but where is the harvest of the Church? Where are revivals now? The Spirit is grieved and is gone from the Church. And, Brothers and Sisters, why?

Have Christian men become worldly? Is it true that you can scarcely tell a Christian from a worldling nowadays? O for more holiness, then! This is the demand which the times make upon us. You men of God be holy, yes, be perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.

Has unbelief restrained the dew and rain of the Spirit? Is it true that He cannot do many mighty works among us because of our unbelief? O for more faith, then! Put up the prayer, Lord increase our faith, and rest not, day or night, till the prayer is heard! Or, my Brothers, are we in this evil case because the Gospel has been veiled with wisdom of words? Is it not a fact that too often the Gospel has been preached with high-sounding elocution and not with simplicity of speech?

The poor have left many of our places of worship because they cannot understand the speakers cumbrous sentences. Many have forgetter that the power of God does not lie in elegance of diction. Is that the cause of the Spirits withdrawing? If so, let Gospel simplicity be cultivated so that the common people may again hear our preachers gladly! Or, is it that Jesus Christ and His atoning blood have been kept in the background? In many pulpits doctrine is preached, but not the Cross. Precepts are preached, but not the blood. Philosophy is preached, but not the Crucified Savior. If it is so, in Gods name let us come back to Jesus Christ and Him Crucified! And if we do so the Spirit of God is sure to be present, for never is Christ preached aright without the Spirit of God, more or less, attending to set His seal to the testimony! He will always honor those who honor the Son of God.

Beloved, we pause for one moment, here, to add, with much gratitude, but far more of jealous trembling, that this little spot does not always wear the same signs as to spiritual weather as the great Church outside, for we have been much favored and just now the tokens with us are those of a more than ordinarily copious shower of Grace. Many of the spiritual have told me that of late they have felt Gods Presence among us in a special degree. And if it is so, the voice of God to us, which I trust we shall hear, is, Servants of God, continue in prayer! Watch for the blessing! Cleanse yourselves from the sins which defile you! Be up and doing in order to win it! Prove the Lord by all holy actions and enterprises, according to His mind, and see if He will not open the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing such that you shall not have room enough to receive it!

II. Now, I have to use the text in reference to THE TIMES WITHIN US. There is a little world within our bosom which has its winds and its clouds and if we are wise we shall watch. First, I shall speak to Believers. Believers, there are times with you when the cloud rises out of the west, and straightway you say, There comes a shower. Times of refreshingyou have had themlook back upon them, they are choice memories. The Holy Spirit bedewed your souls and bestowed on you the excellence of Carmel and Sharon

*What peaceful hours you then enjoyed,*

*How sweet their memory, still.*   
Perhaps you have lost themthen sigh for their speedy return! Perhaps you are enjoying them nowbe very grateful if you are. Brethren, you need such visitations! How can the vineyard of the Lord flourish and bring forth fruit to Him if it is not watered from on high?

Sometimes you need refreshing so grievously that you are painfully conscious of the need. Your praises languish and your prayers almost expire. You need to be visited from on high and you feel it. Beloved, since these refreshing are so precious and so much needed, you should eagerly watch for them. You should go up to the top of Carmel, like Elijahs servant, and with anxious eyes look towards the sea. And whenever you have to say, There is nothing, you should go back to your knees. But you should rise, yet again, with expectancy, even to seven times, and still watch until the cloud appears! You must have the Spirit of God, or how can you live? Much more, how can you bring forth fruit unto perfection? Watch for these showers, then, and when they come, use them! Open your heart, as the earth opens her furrows after a long drought, when there are great gaping cracks in the soil ready to drink in the shower. Let your heart be receptive of the Divine influence. Wait upon the Lord and when the Lord comes to bless you, be like Gideons fleece, ready to imbibe and retain the dew till you are full of it.

Alas, I fear that many professors are dead to the visitations of the Spirit of God. They have no changestheir Christian profession knows neither drought nor rain. Like the statues in St. Pauls Cathedral, unaffected by heat or cold, they stand all the year round in rigid propriety. They have a dead religion and having a dead religion they are not at all conscious of any spiritual power or weakness. No droughts desolate them and no falling showers cheer themthey are as unaffected by heavenly influences as the deep caverns of Adullam. Brethren, above all things beware of a religion altogether destitute of the changes, feelings, sorrows and joys which are inevitably connected with life. If you have passed into a cast-iron state, may the Lord be pleased to break your profession to shiversfor the heart of flesh out of the heart of ironis the result of Grace.

I fear that some professors are not grieved at the absence of the Holy Spirit from themselves or others. If God does not bless the ministry upon which they attend, it does not concern them one half so much as a rise in the price of wheat. And if they, themselves, never experience spiritual joy, they never expected it and are not so much troubled as they would be if they lost a shilling! As to godly sorrow, they avoid it, they call it unbelief and improper anxiety. Whether blessed or unblessed, they remain stupidly contented, drugged into indifference. When God places some professors in the center of blessing they make no use of it. They are not sensible of the Spirits approach and set no store by His operations. If they are not dead they are in such a swoon that God, alone, can discern the difference between them and those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Beloved, may we never fall into that stateGod save us from it! We ought to be sensitive to the approach or removal of the Spirit of Godwalking in His power and dwelling under His shadowand never satisfied unless we daily feel the going forth of His strength.

Believers, we have to speak to you, also, about spiritual drought, for you have such seasons. You see the south wind blow, and you say, There will be heat; and it comes to pass. You have your times of droughtat least I have mine. They may be sent in chastisement. We do not value the blessing of the Spirit enough and so it is withdrawn. Sometimes they may be intended to try our faith, to see whether we can strike our roots deep down into rivers of waters which never dry and tap the eternal springs which lie beneath, and yield not to the summers drought. Perhaps our times of drought are sent to drive us to our God, for when the means of Grace fail us and even the Word no longer comforts us, we may fly to the Lord Himself, and drink at the Wellhead.

Perhaps, however, this drought has been occasioned by ourselves. Worldliness is a south wind which soon brings a parching condition upon the spirits of men. If Christian people lie and act as worldly people dogo to worldly amusements and follow worldly maximsthere is no wonder if they become as parched up as the Eastern land when the hot wind has swept over it! There is a tendency, even in our necessary associations with ungodly men, to wither our spiritual verdureand unless we resort to God, in whom are all our fresh springswe shall soon find a parching heat burning up our religion. And, ah, Brothers and Sisters, if worldliness does not do it, there is the wind of carnal security which will soon bring barrenness into the soul. Begin to think that you are perfect and the dew of Heaven will forsake you! Fancy that matters are so right with you that you have no need to watch, no call to abound in prayer, no need to walk humbly with God, and your Lord will surely punish you for this by bidding the clouds rain no more upon you!

And if you become proud and haughty and domineering over your Brethren, and talk loftily concerning Gods trembling ones, then, again, will the wind from the south turn your garden into a wilderness and make your fruits to perish. Or if you neglect the means of Grace and forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, you will soon be dry as the desert sand. Keep away from the Communion Table, neglect secret prayer, forget reading the Word of God, and you will find that your Lebanon and Bashan will languish and all your flowing brooks will be dried up. Then the lilies of fellowship will droop and the roses of joy will pine away and die for lack of heavenly moisture. Yes, your fat pastures shall be a wilderness and your plenteous harvests shall turn to desolation. May God save us from this! My Brothers and Sisters, if any of the signs of the times in the little world within you betoken such a drought, cry mightily to God and give Him no rest till once again He bids the showers of His mercy gently distil upon your soul, that you may bring forth fruit to His name.

My last and most solemn work is now to come. I have to speak to sinners. Ungodly men are fools before God, but they are very often the reverse of fools in common life. They know what weather there will be. They can read the signs of the skies. Now I ask them to use the wit they have and, of themselves, judge that which is right. If you lived in Palestine, when you saw a cloud you would expect a shower. When you see sin, do you not expect punishment? Can the righteous God permit His laws to be violated and forever sit still? How, then, can He rule the world? Does it stand to reason that the Judge of all the earth will deal out, eventually, the same measure to the righteous and to the wicked? As you are reasonable men, I beseech you answer that question! God has not punished you yet. He has spared you though you are still opposed to Him and His holiness. What does this cloud of the long-suffering of God mean?

I will tell you. It bears drops of gentle mercy in its bosom. The longsuffering of God is salvation. It leads you to repentance. If the Lord had been anxious to destroy you, would He have spared you so long? Does it not look as if He had designs of Grace toward you? You have been rescued from shipwreck, spared from fearer, preserved in battle or accidentand why? Listen to the oath of God, As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live. Let the very fact of Gods long-suffering be to you an inducement to seek mercy, for where there is such a cloud of long-suffering you may expect a rain of Grace!

The preaching of the Gospel to you, todaydoes it not argue showers of mercies waiting for you? Why does the Lord commission ministers without number to proclaim His mercy to sinners if He does not wish to save them? The very fact that you are in the House of Prayer and not in Hell that you are listening to a Gospel warning and not listening to the blast of the Judgment trumpetseems to me like a hopeful cloud betokening a gracious rain! Come to Jesus, Sinner! By the love that spared you, I entreat you, come to Jesus! We urge you to come to Him by the love which sent the Savior, and which now declares to you that if you believe in Him you shall live. May God grant that you may read these blessed signs of the times and hope in God because of them!

Perhaps at this moment you feel some quickening of your conscience, Sinner! You say, I wish I were saved! Oh, that I knew where I might find my Lord! Take these desires as marks of favor to you. Yield to the mysterious impulse. Quench not the Spirit of God! Bow down, now, while there is some life in you, before evil days of hardness come, and kiss the Son lest He be angry! Trust your soul in Jesus hands, according to the Gospel command, and you shall live. Listen to me! Do you say, I will put it off till a more convenient season? That is the parching wind from the south! Do you not know what it will work upon you? It will dry up all the waters of feelingit will parch in you all plants of hope. Your soul is hopeful, now, and like the field in spring when the young grass is coming upbut if you delay, this wind of sluggishness will blast all expectation of your salvationand leave you without hope.

Ah, how many have I seen in this condition! How I have tried to speak with them, but have failed, for they have told me, I was hopeful once, I was impressible once, but now the harvest is passed and the summer is ended, and I am not saved. I cannot feel, I cannot repent, I cannot desire, I am perfectly deadsun burnt, parched, and dried up. One has been obliged to fear that they spoke the truth and to turn away from their death-beds with this feelingYou did call them, O God, and they refused. You did stretch out Your hands and they would not regard them. And now, not even a sense of fear or terror is left to them.

Have any of you been abroad in the fields during the past week? If so, you must have marked the waning year. The leaves are fading all around us, clothing the departing year with a wonderful beauty. As they fade away one by one, they preach to us and say, You, too, O Men, will soon fall to earth and wither. Have you heard the sermons of the falling leaves? You say to yourselves, Winter will soon be here. You begin to lay in your stocks of fuel to meet the coming cold. And do you not see those gray hairs upon your headare they not wintry tokens, too? Do you not note those decaying teeth, those trembling limbs, those loosened sinews, that furrowed brow? Do not these betoken that your winter is hastening on? Have you made no provision for eternity? Will you be driven forever away, away, away, where there shall be no hope? Have you laid by no stores of comfort for another world?

O fools, and slow of heart! Let even the birds of the air rebuke you! The other day I saw the swallows gathering, holding assemblies, as though they were enquiring and answering questions. And then, when the time was come, away they flew across the sea to sunnier climes! They did not wait here till all their food was gone and they must famish. No, they took to themselves wings and followed the sun. Has all the wisdom entered into birds and have men none? The stork in the Heaven knows her appointed times, and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the judgment of the Lord.

You will wait in this world and linger among its dying joys till you die and perish forever. Oh, that you would take the wings of faith and fly where the Sun of Righteousness points the way! There, where the Cross is the guiding constellationthere steer your courseand you will reach the land of everlasting summer where fading flowers and withering leaves are never known! Believe in Jesus, Sinner! Set your hopes on Him, or if not, I must say to you as Christ did to the people, When you see the south wind blow, you say, There will be heat; and it comes to pass. You hypocrites, you can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth; but how is it that you do not discern this time? Yes, and why even of yourselves judge you not what is right?

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONLuke 12:13-21; 30-59. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #408 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

ACCIDENTS, NOT PUNISHMENTS   
NO. 408

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 8, 1861, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, suppose you that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, No: but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think you that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem! I tell you, No: but, except you repent, you shall   
all likewise perish.   
Luke 13:1-5.**

THE year 1861 will have a notoriety among its fellows as the year of calamities. Just at that season when man goes forth to reap the fruit of his labors, when the harvest of the earth is ripe and the barns are beginning to burst with the new wheat, Death, the mighty reaper, has come forth to cut down his harvest. Full sheaves have been gathered into his garner the tomb and terrible have been the wailings which compose the harvest hymn of death. In reading the newspapers during the last two weeks, even the most stolid must have been the subject of very painful feelings.

Not only have there been catastrophes so alarming that the blood chills at their remembrance but column after column of the paper has been devoted to calamities of a minor degree of horror, but which, when added together, are enough to astound the mind with the fearful amount of sudden death which has of late fallen on the sons of men. We have had not only one incident for every day in the week, but two or three. We have not simply been stunned with the alarming noise of one terrific clash, but many have followed upon each others heelslike Jobs messengerstill we have needed Jobs patience and resignation to hear the dreadful tale of woes.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, such things as these have always happened in all ages of the world. Think not that this is a new thing. Do not dream, as some do, that this is the produce of an overwrought civilization, or of that modern and most wonderful discovery of steam. If the steam engine had never been known and if the railway had never been constructed there would have been sudden deaths and terrible accidents, not withstanding. In taking up the old records in which our ancestors wrote down their accidents and calamities, we find that the old stage coach yielded quite as heavy a booty to death as does the swiftly-rushing train.

There were gates to Hades then as many as there are now and roads to death quite as steep and precipitous and traveled by quite as vast a multitude as in our present time. Do you doubt that? Permit me to refer you to

the chapter before you. Remember those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell. What if no collision crushed them? What if they were not destroyed by the ungovernable iron horse dragging them down from an embankment? Yet some badly built tower, or some wall beaten by the tempest could fall upon eighteen at a time and they might perish. Or worse than that, a despotic ruler, having the lives of men at his girdle like the keys of his palace, might fall upon worshippers in the temple itself and mix their blood with the blood of the bullocks which they were just then sacrificing to the God of Heaven.

Do not think, then, that this is an age in which God is dealing more harshly with us than of old. Do not think that Gods Providence has become more lax than it wasthere always were sudden deaths and there always will be. There always were seasons when deaths wolves hunted in hungry packs and, probably, until the end of this dispensation, the last enemy will hold his periodic festivals and glut the worms with the flesh of men. Be not, therefore, cast down with any sudden fear. Neither be troubled by these calamities. Go about your business and if your avocations should call you to cross the field of death itself, do it and do it bravely. God has not thrown up the reins of the world, He has not taken off His hand from the helm of the great ship. Still

*He everywhere has sway,   
And all things serve His might;   
His every act pure blessing is,   
His path unsullied light.*

Only learn to trust Him and you shall not be afraid of sudden fearYour soul shall dwell at ease and your seed shall inherit the earth.

The particular subject of this morning, however, is thisthe use which we ought to make of these fearful texts which God is writing in capital letters upon the history of the world. God has spoken once, yes, twicelet it not be said that man regards it not. We have seen a glimmering of Gods power. We have beheld something of the readiness with which He can destroy our fellow creatures. Let us hear the rod and Him that has appointed it, and in hearing it, let us do two things. First, let us not be so foolish as to draw the conclusion of superstitious and ignorant persons that conclusions which is hinted at in the text, namely that those who are thus destroyed by accident are sinners above all the sinners that are in the land.

And secondly, let us draw the right and proper inferencelet us make practical use of all these events for our own personal improvement. Let us hear the voice of the Savior saying, Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.

I. First then, LET US TAKE HEED THAT WE DO NOT DRAW THE RASH AND HASTY CONCLUSION FROM TERRIBLE ACCIDENTSTHAT THOSE WHO SUFFER BY THEM SUFFER ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR SINS.

It has been most absurdly stated that those who travel on the first day of the week and meet with an accident ought to regard that accident as being a judgment from God upon them on account of their violating the Christians day of worship. It has been stated even by godly ministers that the late deplorable collision should be looked upon as an exceedingly wonderful and remarkable visitation of the wrath of God against those unhappy persons who happened to be in the Clayton tunnel.

Now I enter my solemn protest against such an inference as that not in my own namebut in the name of Him who is the Christians Master and the Christians Teacher. I say of those who were crushed in that tunnel do you think that they were sinners more than all the sinners? I tell you allexcept you repent, you shall all likewise perish. Or those who perished but last Monday, do you think that they were sinners above all the sinners that were in London? I tell you, Nobut, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. Now mark, I would not deny but what there have sometimes been judgments of God upon particular persons for sin. Sometimes but I think but exceedingly rarely, such things have occurred.

Some of us have heard in our own experience instances of men who have blasphemed God and defied Him to destroy them and have suddenly fallen dead. And in such cases the punishment has so quickly followed the blasphemy that one could not help perceiving the hand of God in it. The man had wantonly asked for the judgment of Godhis prayer was heard and the judgment came. And beyond a doubt, there are what may be called natural judgments. You see a man ragged, poor, houseless. He has been a profligate. He has been a drunkard. He has lost his character and it is but the just judgment of God upon him that he should be starving and that he should be an outcast among men.

You see in the hospitals loathsome specimens of men and women foully diseased. God forbid that we should deny that in such a casethe punishment being the natural result of the sinthere is a judgment of God upon licentiousness and ungodly lusts. And the same may be said in many instances where there is so clear a link between the sin and the punishment that the blindest men may discern that God has made Misery the child of Sin. But in cases of accidentsuch as that to which I refer and in cases of sudden and instant death, again, I say, I enter my earnest protest against the foolish and ridiculous idea that those who thus perish are sinners above all the sinners who survive unharmed.

Let me just try to reason this matter out with Christian peoplefor there are some unenlightened Christian people who will feel horrified by what I have said. Those who are ready at perversions may even dream that I would apologize for the breach of the day of worship. Now I do no such thing. I do not extenuate the sinI only testify and declare that accidents are not to be viewed as punishments for sinfor punishment belongs not to this world but to the world to come. To all those who hastily look on every calamity as a judgment I would speak in the earnest hope of setting them right.

Let me begin, then, by saying, my dear Brethren, do you not see that what you say is not true? And that is the best reason why you should not say it. Does not your own experience and observation teach you that one event happens both to the righteous and to the wicked? It is true, the

wicked man sometimes falls dead in the street. But has not the minister fallen dead in the pulpit? It is true that a pleasure boat, in which men were seeking their own pleasure on a Sunday has suddenly gone down. But is it not equally true that a ship which contained none but godly men, who were bound upon an excursion to preach the Gospel has gone down, too?

The visible Providence of God has no respect of persons. And a storm may gather around the John Williams missionary ship, quite as well as around a vessel filled with riotous sinners. Why, do you not perceive that the Providence of God has been, in fact, in its outward dealings, rather harder upon the good than upon the bad? For did not Paul say, as he looked upon the miseries of the righteous in his day, If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable? The path of righteousness has often conducted men to the rack, to prison, to the gibbet, to the stakewhile the road of sin has often led a man to empire, to dominion and to high esteem among his fellows.

It is not true that in this world God does punish men for sin and reward them for their good deeds. Did not David say, I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree? And did not this perplex the Psalmist for a little season until he went into the sanctuary of God and then he understood their end? Your faith assures you that the ultimate result of Providence will work out only good to the people of God. Your life, though it be but a brief part of the Divine drama of history, must have taught you that Providence does not outwardly discriminate between the righteous and the wicked. The righteous perish suddenly as well as the wicked. The plague knows no difference between the sinner and the saint. The sword of war is alike pitiless to the sons of God and the sons of Belial.

When God sends forth the scourge, it slays suddenly the innocent as well as the perverse and obstinate. Now, my Brethren, if your idea of an avenging and awarding Providence is not true, why should you talk as if it were? And why, if it is not correct as a general rule, should you suppose it to be true in this one particular instance? Get the idea out of your head for the Gospel of God never needs you to believe an untruth!

But, secondly, there is another reason. The idea that whenever an accident occurs we are to look upon it as a judgment from God would make the Providence of God to be, instead of a great deep, a fiery shallow pool. Why, any child can understand the Providence of God, if it is true that when there is a railway accident it is because people travel on a Sunday. I take any little child from the smallest infant class form in the SundaySchool and he will say, Yes, I see that. But then if such a thing is Providence. If it is a Providence that can be understoodmanifestly it is not the Scriptural idea of Providencefor in the Scripture we are always taught that Gods Providence is a great deep.

And even Ezekiel who had the wing of the cherubim and could fly aloftwhen he saw the wheels which were the great picture of the Providence of Godhe could only say the wheels were so high that they were terrible and were full of eyes so that he cried, O wheel! IfI repeat it to make it plainif always a calamity were the result of some sin, Providence would be as simple as that twice two made four. It would be one of the first lessons that a little child might learn. But Scripture teaches us that Providence is a great depth in which the human intellect may swim and dive but it can neither find a bottom nor a shore. And if you and I pretend that we can find out the reasons of Providence and twist the dispensations of God over our fingers, we only prove our follywe do not prove that we have begun to understand the ways of God.

Why look, Sirssuppose for a moment there were some great performance going on and you should step in the middle of it and see one actor upon the stage for a moment and you should say, Yes, I understand it. What a simpleton you would be! Do you not know that the great transactions of Providence began near six thousand years ago? And you have only stepped into this world for thirty or forty years and seen one actor on the stage and you say you understand it. Tush! you do not. You have only begun to know. Only He knows the end from the beginning. Only He understands what are the great results and what is the great reason for which the world was made and for which He permits both good and evil to occur. Think not that you know the ways of God. It is to degrade Providence and to bring God down to the level of men when you pretend that you can understand these calamities and find out the secret designs of wisdom.

But next, do you not perceive that such an idea as this would encourage Phariseeism? These people who were crushed to death, or scalded, or destroyed under the wheels of railway carriages, were worse sinners than we are! Very well, thenwhat good people we must be. What excellent examples of virtue! We do not such things as they and therefore God makes all things smooth for us. Inasmuch as we here traveled, some of us every day in the week and yet have never been smashed to pieces, we may on this supposition rank ourselves with the favorites of Deity. And then, do you not see, Brethren, our safety would be an argument for our being Christians? Our having traveled on a railway safely would be an argument that we were regenerate personsyet I have never read in the ScripturesWe know that we have passed from death unto life because we have traveled from London to Brighton safely twice a day.

I never found a verse which looked like this. And yet if it were true that the worst of sinners met with accidents, it would follow as a natural converse to that propositionthat those who do not meet with accidents must be very good people. And what Pharisaical notions we thus beget and foster. But I cannot indulge the folly for a moment. As I look for a moment upon the poor mangled bodies of those who have been so suddenly slain, my eyes find tearsbut my heart does not boast, nor my lips accusefar from me be the boastful cry, God, I thank you that I am not as these men are! No, no, noit is NOT the spirit of Christnor the spirit of Christianity.   
While we can thank God that we are preserved, yet we can say, It is of

Your mercy that we are not consumed. And we must ascribe it to His grace and to His grace alone. But we cannot suppose that we are any better. It is only because He has had mercy and been very long-suffering with us, not willing that we should perish but that we should come to repentance, that He has thus preserved us from going down to the grave and kept us alive.

And then, will you allow me to remark that the supposition against which I am earnestly contending is a very cruel and unkind one. For if this were the casethat all persons who thus meet with their death in an extraordinary and terrible manner were greater sinners than the rest would it not be a crushing blow to bereaved survivors and is it not ungenerous on our part to indulge the idea unless we are compelled by unanswerable reasons to accept it as an awful Truth? Now, I defy you to whisper it in the widows ear. Go home to her and say, Your husband was a worse sinner than the rest of men, therefore he died. You have not brutality enough for that.

A little unconscious infant, which had never sinned, though, doubtless, an inheritor of Adams Fall, is found crushed amidst the debris of the accident. Now think for a momentwhat would be the infamous consequence of the supposition that those who perished were worse than others? You would have to make it out that this unconscious infant was a worse sinner than many in the dens of infamy whose lives are yet spared. Do you not perceive that the thing is radically false and I might perhaps show you the injustice of it best by reminding you that it may one day turn upon your own head. Let it be your own case that you should meet with sudden death in such a wayare you willing to be adjudged to damnation on that account? Such an event may happen in the house of God.

Let me recall to my own and to your sorrowful recollection what occurred when once we met together. I can say with a pure heart we met for no object but to serve our God and the minister had no aim in going to that place but that of gathering many to hear who otherwise would not have listened to his voice. Yet there were funerals as the result of a holy effort (for holy effort still we avow it to have been and the after-smile of God has proved it so). There were deaths and deaths among Gods People. I was about to say I am glad it was with Gods people rather than with others. A fearful fright took hold upon the congregation and they fled and do you not see that if accidents are to be viewed as judgments, then it is a fair inference that we were sinning in being there?An insinuation which our consciences repudiates with scorn!

However, if that logic were true it is as true against us as it is against others and inasmuch as you would repel with indignation the accusation that any were grounded or hurt on account of sin, in being there to worship Godwhat you repel for yourself repel for othersand be no party to the accusation which is brought against those who have been destroyed during the last fortnight, that they perished on account of any great sin.

Here I anticipate the outcries of prudent and zealous persons who tremble for the ark of God and would touch it with Uzzahs hand. Well, says one, but we ought not to talk like this, for it is a very serviceable superstition because there are many people who will be kept from traveling on a Sunday by the accident. We ought to tell them, therefore, that those who perished, perished because they traveled on Sunday. Brethren, I would not tell a lie to save a soul and this would be telling lies. I would do anything to stop Sunday labor and sinbut I would not forge a falsehood even to do that. They might have perished on a Monday as well as on a Sunday. God gives no special immunity any day of the week and accidents may occur as well at one time as at another. It is only a pious fraud when we seek thus to pray upon the superstition of men to make capital for Christ.

The Roman Catholic priest might consistently use such an argument. But an honest Christian man who believes that the religion of Christ can take care of itself without his telling falsehoods scorns to do it. These men did not perish because they traveled on a Sunday. Witness the fact that others perished on the Monday when they were on an errand of mercy. I know not why God sent the accident. God forbid that we should offer our own reason when God has not given us His reason. But we are not allowed to make the superstition of men an instrument for the advancing the glory of God.

You know among Protestants there is a great deal of popery. I meet with people who uphold infant baptism on the plea, Well, it is not doing any hurt and there is a great deal of good meaning in it and it may do good and even confirmation may be blessed to some people and therefore do not let us speak against it. I have nothing to do with whether the thing does hurt or not. All I have to do with is whether it is right, whether it is Scriptural, whether it is true. And if the Truth does mischief, which is a supposition we can by no means allow, that mischief will not lie at our door. We have nothing to do but to speak the Truth even though the heavens should fall. I say again that any advancement of the Gospel which is owing to the superstition of men is a false advanceand it will by-and-by recoil upon the people who use such an unhallowed weapon.

We have a religion which appeals to mans judgment and common sense and when we cannot get on with that I scorn that we should proceed by any other means. And, Brethren, if there is any person who should harden his heart and say, Well, I am as safe on one day as another, which is quite true, I must say to him, The sin of your making such a use as this of a Truth must lie at your own door, not at mine. But if I could keep you from violating the Christians day of rest by putting before you a superstitious hypothesis, I would not do it because I feel that though I might keep you from that one sin a little while, you would byand-by grow too intelligent to be duped by me and then you would come to look upon me as a priest who had played upon your fears instead of appealing to your judgment.   
Oh, it is time for us to know that our Christianity is not a weak, shivering thing that appeals to the petty superstitious fears of ignorant and darkened minds! It is a manly thing, loving the light and needing no sanctified frauds for its defense. Yes, Critic! Turn your lantern upon us and let it glare into our very eyes. We are not afraidTruth is mighty and it can prevailand if it cannot prevail in the daylight we have no wish that the sun should set to give it an opportunity. I believe that very much infidelity has sprung from the very natural desire of some Christian people to make use of common mistakes. Oh, they have said, this popular error is a very good one, it keeps people right. Let us perpetuate the mistake, for it evidently does good. And then, when the mistake has been found out, infidels have said, Oh, you see how these Christian people are found out in their tricks.

Let us have no tricks, Brethren. Let us not talk to men as though they were little children and could be frightened by tales of ghosts and witches. The fact is that this is not the time of retribution and it is worse than idle for us to teach that it is so.

And now, lastlyand then I leave this pointdo you not perceive that the un-Christian and un-Scriptural supposition that when men suddenly meet with death it is the result of sin, robs Christianity of one of its noblest arguments for the immortality of the soul? Brethren, we assert daily with Scripture for our warrant that God is just and inasmuch as He is just, He must punish sin and reward the righteous. Manifestly He does not do it in this world. I think I have plainly shown that in this world one event happens to both. The righteous man is poor as well as the wicked and he dies suddenly as well as the most graceless.

Very well, thenthe inference is natural and clear that there must be a next world in which these things must be righted. If there is a God He must be just. And if He is just He must punish sin. And since He does not do it in this world, there therefore must be another state in which men shall receive the due reward of their works and they that have sown to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, while they that have sown to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Make this world the reaping place and you have taken the sting out of sin. Oh, says the sinner, if the sorrows men endure here is all the punishment they will have, we will sin greedily. Say to them, No. This is not the world of punishment but the world of probation. It is not the court of justice but the land of mercy. It is not the prison of terror but the house of long-suffering. And you have opened before their eyes the gates of the future. You have set the judgment Throne before their eyes. You have reminded them of, Come, you blessed, and Depart, you cursed. You have a more reasonable, not to say a more Scriptural ground of appeal to their consciences and to their hearts.

I have thus spoken with the view of putting down as much as I can the idea which is too current among the ungodlythat we as Christians hold every calamity to be a judgment. We do not. We do not believe that those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell were sinners above all the sinners that were in Jerusalem.

II. Now to our second point. WHAT USE, THEN, OUGHT WE TO MAKE OF THIS VOICE OF GOD AS HEARD AMIDST THE SHRIEKS AND GROANS OF DYING MEN?

Two usesfirst, inquiry and secondly, warning. The first inquiry. We should ask ourselvesWhy may it not be my case that I may very soon and suddenly be cut off? Have I a lease of my life? Have I any special guardianship which ensures me that I shall not suddenly pass the portals of the tomb? Have I received a charter of longevity? Have I been covered with such a coat of armor that I am invulnerable to the arrows of death? Why am I not to die?

And the next question it should suggest is thisAm not I as great a sinner as those who died? Are there not with me, even with me, sins against the Lord my God? If in outward sin others have exceeded me, are not the thoughts of my heart evil? Does not the same Law which curses them curse me? I have not continued in all the things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them. It is as impossible that I should be saved by my works as that they should be. Am not I under the Law as well as they by nature and therefore am not I as well as they under the curse?

Instead of thinking of their sins which would make me proud, I should think of my own which will make me humble. Instead of speculating upon their guiltwhich is no business of mineI should turn my eyes within and think upon my own transgression for which I must personally answer before the Most High God. Then the next question is, Have I repented of my sin? I need not be inquiring whether they have or nothave I? Since I am liable to the same calamity, am I prepared to meet it? Have I felt, through the Holy Spirits convincing power, the blackness and depravity of my heart? Have I been led to confess before God that I deserve His wrath and that His displeasure, if it lights on me, will be my just due? Do I hate sin? Have I learned to abhor it? Have I, through the Holy Spirit, turned away from it as from a deadly poison and do I seek now to honor Christ my Master?

Am I washed in His blood? Do I bear His likeness? Do I reflect His character? Do I seek to live to His praise? If not, I am in as great a danger as they were and may quite as suddenly be cut off and then where am I? I will not ask where are they? And then, again, instead of prying into the future destiny of these unhappy men and women, how much better to inquire into our own destiny and our own state!

*What am I? My soul, awake,*

*And an impartial survey take.*   
Am I prepared to die? If now the gates of Hell should be opened, shall I enter there? If now beneath me the wide jaws of death should gape, am I prepared with confidence to walk through the midst of them, fearing no evil, because God is with me?

This is the proper use to make of these accidents. This is the wisest way to apply the judgments of God to our own selves and to our own condition. O Sirs, God has spoken to every man in London during these last

two weeks. He has spoken to me. He has spoken to you. Men, women and children. Gods voice has rung out of the dark tunnelhas spoken from the sunset and from the glaring bonfire round which lay the corpses of men and women. And He has said to you, Be you also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes. It is so spoken to you that I hope it may set you inquiring, Am I prepared? Am I ready? Am I willing now to face my Judge and hear the sentence pronounced upon my soul?

When we have used it thus for inquiry, let me remind you that we ought to use it also for warning. You shall all likewise perish. No, says one, not likewise. We shall not all be crushed, many of us will die in our beds. We shall not all be burned. Many of us will tranquilly close our eyes. Yes, but the text says, You shall all likewise

perish. And let me remind you that some of you may perish in the same identical manner. You have no reason to believe that you may not also suddenly be cut off while walking the streets. You may fall dead while eating your mealshow many have perished with the staff of life in their hands! You shall be in your bed and your bed shall suddenly be made your tomb. You shall be strong, hale, hearty and in healthand either by an accident or by the stoppage of the circulation of your blood, you shall be suddenly hurried before your God. Oh, may sudden death to you be sudden glory!

But it may happen with some of us that in the same sudden manner as others have died, so shall we. But lately in America, a Brother, while preaching the Word, laid down his body and his charge at once. You remember the death of Dr. Beaumont, who, while proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, closed his eyes to earth? And I remember the death of a minister in this country, who had but just given out the verse

*Father, I long, I faint to see   
The place of Your abode;   
Id leave Your earthly courts and flee   
Up to Your house, my God,*

when it pleased God to grant him the desire of his heart and he appeared before the King in His beauty. Then may not such a sudden death as that happen to you and to me?

But it is quite certain that, let death come when it may, there are some few respects in which it will come to us in just the same manner as it has to those who have so lately been hurried away. First, it will come quite as surely. They could not, travel as fast as they would, escape from the Pursuer. They could not journey where they may, from home or to home, escape the shaft when the time had come. And so shall we perish. Just as surely, as certainly as death has set his seal upon the corpses which are not covered with the sod, so certainly shall he set his seal on us (unless the Lord should come before), for it is appointed unto all men once to die and after death the judgment.

There is no discharge in this way. There is no escape for any individual. There is no bridge over this river. There is no ferry by which we may cross this Jordan dry shod. Into your chill depths, O river, each one of us must descend. In your cold stream our blood must be frozen. And beneath your foaming billows our head must sink! We, too, must surely die. Trite, you say, and commonplaceand death is commonplace, but it only happens once to us. God grant that that once dying may perpetually be in our minds till we die daily and find it not hard work to die at the last.

Well then, as death comes both to them and to us surely, so will it come both to them and to us most potently and irresistibly. When death surprised them, then what help had they? A childs card house was not more easily crushed than these ponderous carriages. What could they do to help one another? They are sitting talking side by side. The scream is heard and before a second cry can be uttered they are crushed and mangled. The husband may seek to extricate his wife, but heavy timbers have covered her body he can only find at last her poor head and she is dead. He takes his sorrowful seat by her side and puts his hand upon her brow until it is stone cold and though he has seen one and another plucked with broken bones from the midst of the ruined mass, he has to leave her body there. Alas, his children are motherless and himself robbed of the partner of his bosom.

They could not resist. They might do what they would, but as soon as the moment came, on they wentand death or broken bones was the result. So with you and mebribe the physician with the largest fee, but he could not put fresh blood into your veins. Pay him in masses of gold but he could not make the pulse give another throb. Death, irresistible conqueror of men, there is none that can stand against you, your word is law, your will is destiny! So shall it come to us as it did to themit shall come with power and none of us can resist.

When it came to them, it came instantly and would not delay. So will it come to us. We may have longer notice than they but when the hour has struck there shall be no postponing it. Gather up your feet in your bed, O Patriarch, for you must die and not live! Give the last kiss to your wife. You veteran soldier of the cross put your hands upon your childrens heads and give them the dying benedictionfor all your prayers cannot lengthen out your life and all your tears cannot add a drop to the dry wellspring of your being. You must go. The Master sends for you and He allows no delay.

No, though your whole family should be ready to sacrifice their lives to buy you but an hour of respite, it must not be. Though a nation should be a holocaust, a willing sacrifice, to give its sovereign another week in addition to his reign, yet it must not be. Though the whole flock should willingly consent to tread the dark vaults of the tomb to let their pastors life be spared but for another year, it must not be. Death will have no delay. The time is up, the clock has struck, the sand has run out and as certainly as they died when their time was comein the field by sudden accidentso certainly must we.

And then, again, let us remember that death will come to us as it did to them with terrors. Not with the crash of broken timbers perhaps. Not with the darkness of the tunnel, not with the smoke and with the steam. Not with the shrieks of women and the groans of dying menbut yet with terrors. For meet death where we may, if we are not in Christ and if the Shepherds rod and staff do not comfort us, to die must be an awful and tremendous thing. Yes, in your body, O Sinnerwith downy pillows beneath your head and a wifes tender arm to bear you up and a tender hand to wipe your clammy sweatyou will find it awful work to face the monster and feel his sting and enter into his dread dominion. It is awful work at any time and at every timeunder the best and most propitious circumstancesfor a man to die unprepared.

And now I would send you away with this one thought abiding on your memories. We are dying creaturesnot living creatures. And we shall soon be gone. Perhaps, as here I stand and rudely talk of these mysterious things, soon shall this hand be stretched and dumb the mouth that lisps the faltering strain. Power supreme, O everlasting King, come when You may! Oh, may You never intrude upon an ill-spent hourbut find me wrapped in meditation high, singing to my great Creatordoing works of mercy to the poor and needy ones. Or bearing in my arms the poor and weary of the flock. Or solacing the disconsolate, or blowing the blast of the Gospel trumpet in the ears of deaf and perishing souls!

Then come when You will, if You are with me in life, I shall not fear to meet You in death. But oh, let my soul be ready with her weddinggarment, with her lamp trimmed and her light burning, ready to see her Master and enter into the joy of her Lord! Souls, you know the way of salvation, you have heard it often, hear it yet againHe that believes on the Lord Jesus has everlasting life. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned. Believe you with your heart and with your mouth make confession. May the Holy Spirit give the grace to do both and this done, you may say

*Come, death and some celestial band,   
To bear my soul away!*  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1451A Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THIS YEAR ALSO   
NO. 1451A

FOR THE NEW YEAR - 1879.   
FROM THE SICK CHAMBER OF C. H. SPURGEON.   
This year also.   
Luke 13:6.

AT the opening of another year and at the commencement of another volume of sermons, we earnestly desire to utter the word of exhortation, but alas, at this present, the preacher is a prisoner and must speak from his pillow instead of his pulpit! Let not the few words which we can put together come with diminished power from a sick man, for the musket fired by a wounded soldier sends forth the bullet with none the less force. Our desire is to speak with living words, or not at all. He who enables us to sit up and compose these trembling sentences is entreated to clothe them with His Spirit, that they may be according to His own mind.

The interceding vinedresser pleaded for the fruitless fig tree, let it alone this year also, dating, as it were, a year from the time wherein he spoke. Trees and fruit-bearing plants have a natural measurement for their livesevidently a year came to its close when it was time to seek fruit on the fig tree and another year commenced when the vinedresser began, again, his digging and pruning work. Men are such barren things that their fruitage marks no certain periods and it becomes necessary to make artificial divisions of time for them. There seems to be no set period for mans spiritual harvest or vintage, or if there is, the sheaves and the clusters come not in their season and hence we have to say one to anotherThis shall be the beginning of a new year.

Be it so, then. Let us congratulate each other upon seeing the dawn of this year also, and let us unitedly pray that we may enter upon it, continue in it and come to its close under the unfailing blessing of the Lord to whom all years belong.

I. The beginning of a new year SUGGESTS A RETROSPECT. Let us take it deliberately and honestly. This year alsothen there had been former years. The dresser of the vineyard was not, for the first time, aware of the fig trees failure and neither had the owner come, for the first time, seeking figs in vain. God, who gives us this year also, has given us others before itHis sparing mercy is no novelty! His patience has already been taxed by our provocations. First came our youthful years when even a little fruit unto God is peculiarly sweet to Him. How did we spend them? Did our strength run all into wild wood and wanton branch? If so, we may well bewail that wasted vigor, that life misspent, that sin exceedingly multiplied.

He who saw us misuse those golden months of youth, nevertheless affords us this year also, and we should enter upon it with a holy jealousy lest what of strength and ardor may be left to us should be allowed to run away into the same wasteful courses as before. Upon the heels of our youthful years came those of early manhood when we began to muster a

household and to become as a tree fixed in its place. Then, also, fruit would have been precious. Did we bear any? Did we present unto the Lord a basket of summer fruit? Did we offer Him the first-fruits of our strength? If we did so, we may well adore the Divine Grace which so early saved us! But if not, the past chides us and, lifting an admonitory finger, it warns us not to let this year also follow the way of the rest of our lives!

He who has wasted youth and the morning of manhood has surely had enough of foolingthe time past may well suffice him to have worked the will of the fleshit will be a superfluity of haughtiness to suffer this year also to be trod down in the service of sin. Many of us are now in the prime of life and our years already spent are not few. Have we still a need to confess that our years are eaten up by the grasshopper and the cankerworm? Have we reached the half-way house and still know not where we are going? Are we fools at forty? Are we half a century old by the calendar and yet far off from years of discretion? Alas, great God, that there should be men past this age who are still without knowledge!

Unsaved at sixty? Unregenerate at seventy? Unawakened at eighty? Unrenewed at ninety? These are each and all startling words! Perhaps they will fall upon ears which they should make tingle, but they will hear them as though they heard them not. Continuance in evil breeds callousness of heart and when the soul has long been sleeping in indifference, it is hard to arouse it from the deadly slumber. The sound of the words, this year also, makes some of us remember years of great mercy, sparkling and flashing with delight. Were those years laid at the Lords feet? They were comparable to the silver bells upon the horseswere they holiness unto the Lord?

If not, how shall we answer for it if this year also should be musical with merry mercy and yet be spent in the ways of carelessness? The same words recall some of us our years of sharp affliction when we were, indeed, dug about and fertilized. How went those years? God was doing great things for us, exercising careful and expensive husbandry, caring for us with exceedingly great and wise caredid we render according to the benefit received? Did we rise from the bed more patient and gentle, weaned from the world and welded to Christ? Did we bring forth clusters to reward the dresser of the vineyard? Let us not refuse these questions of self-examination, for it may be this is to be another of these years of captivity, another season of the furnace and the refining pot! The Lord grant that the coming tribulation may take more chaff out of us than any of its predecessorsand leave the wheat cleaner and better.

The new year also reminds us of opportunities for usefulness which have come and goneand of unfulfilled resolutions which have blossomed only to fade. Shall this year also be as those which have gone before? May we not hope for Grace to advance upon Grace already gained and should we not seek for power to turn our poor sickly promises into robust action? Looking back on the past we lament the follies by which we would not willingly be held captive this year also, and we adore the forgiving mercy, the preserving Providence, the boundless liberality, the Divine love of which we hope to be partakers this year also.

II. If the preacher could think freely, he could carry the text at his pleasure in many directions, but he is feeble and so must let it drive with the current which bears it on to a second considerationthe text MENTIONS A MERCY. It was in great goodness that the tree which cumbered the soil was allowed to stand for another year. Prolonged life should always be regarded as a gift of mercy. We must view this year also as a grant from Divine Grace. It is wrong to speak as if we cared nothing for life and looked upon our being here as an evil or a punishment. We are here this year also as the result of loves pleading and in pursuance of loves designs.

The wicked man should count that the Lords longsuffering points to his salvation and he should permit the cords of love to draw him to it. O that the Holy Spirit would make the blasphemer, the Sabbath-breaker and the openly vicious to feel what a wonder it is that their lives are prolonged this year also! Are they spared to curse, riot and defy their Maker? Shall this be the only fruit of patient mercy? The procrastinator who has put off the messenger of Heaven with his delays and promises ought he not wonder that he is allowed to see this year also? How is it that the Lord has borne with him and put up with his vacillations and hesitations? Is this year of Grace to be spent in the same manner?

Transient impressions, hasty resolves and speedy apostasiesare these to be the weary story over and over again? The startled conscience, the tyrant passion, the smothered emotion! Are these to be the tokens of yet another year? May God forbid that any one of us should hesitate and delay through this year also. Infinite Pity holds back the axe of Justiceshall it be insulted by the repetition of the sins which caused the uplifting of the instrument of wrath? What can be more tantalizing to the heart of goodness than indecision? Well might the Lords Prophet become impatient and cry, How long halt you between two opinions? Well may God Himself push for a decision and demand an immediate reply!

O undecided Soul, will you swing much longer between Heaven and Hell and act as if it were hard to choose between the slavery of Satan and the liberty of the Great Fathers home of love? This year also will you sport in defiance of Justice and pervert the generosity of Mercy into a license for still further rebellion? This year also must Divine Love be made an occasion for continued sin? O do not act so basely, so contrary to every noble instinct, so injuriously to your own best interests! The Believer is kept out of Heaven this year also in love and not in anger. There are some for whose sake it is necessary he should abide in the fleshsome to be helped by Him on their heavenward wayand others to be led to the Redeemers feet by His instruction.

The Heaven of many saints is not yet prepared for them because their nearest companions have not yet arrived and their spiritual children have not yet gathered in Glory in sufficient number to give them a thoroughly heavenly welcome! They must wait this year also that their rest may be the more glorious and that the sheaves which they will bring with them may afford them greater joy. Surely, for the sake of souls, for the delight

of glorifying our Lord and for the increase of the jewels of our crown, we may be glad to wait below this year also.

This is a wide field, but we may not linger in it, for our space is little and our strengths even less.   
III. Our last feeble utterance shall remind you that the expression, This year also, IMPLIES A LIMIT. The vine-dresser asked for no longer a reprieve than one year. If his digging and fertilizing should not prove successful, he would plead no more and the tree would be cut down. Even when Jesus is the Pleader, the request of mercy has its boundaries and times. It is not forever that we shall be let alone and allowed to cumber the ground. If we will not repent, we must perish! If we will not be benefited by the spade we must fall by the axe! There will come a last year for each one of us! Therefore let each one say to himselfIs this my last?   
If it should be the last with the preacher, he would gird up his loins to deliver the Lords message with all his soul and bid his fellow men be reconciled to God. Dear Friend, is this year also to be your last? Are you ready to see the curtain rise upon eternity? Are you prepared, now, to hear the midnight cry and to enter into the marriage supper? The Judgment and all that will follow is surely the heritage of every living man blessed are they who, by faith in Jesus, are able to face the bar of God without a thought of terror! If we live to be counted among the oldest inhabitants we must depart at lastthere must be an end and the Voice must be heardThus says the Lord, this year you shall die.   
So many have gone before us and are going every hour, that no man should need any other memento and yet man is so eager to forget his own mortality and, thereby, to forfeit his hopes of bliss, that we cannot too often bring it before the minds eyes. O mortal Man, what do you think? Prepare to meet your God, for you must meet Him! Seek the Savior, yes, seek Him before another sun sinks to its rest!   
Once more, this year also, and it may be for this year, only, the Cross is uplifted as the lighthouse of the worldthe one Light to which no eye can look in vain! Oh that millions would look that way and live! Soon the Lord Jesus will come a second time and then the blaze of His Throne will supplant the mild radiance of His Cross! The Judge will be seen rather than the Redeemer! Now He saves, but then He will destroy! Let us hear His voice at this moment! He has given us another day, let us be eager to avail ourselves of the gracious season! Let us believe in Jesus this day, seeing it may be our last!  
These are the pleas of one who now falls back on his pillow in very weakness. Hear them for your souls sakes and live! Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #650 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

JUDGMENT THREATENING BUT MERCY SPARING

NO. 650

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 17, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Cut it down; why does it use up the ground? But he answered and said to him, Lord, let it alone this year also. Luke 13:7, 8.**

THE comparison of a man to a tree and of human works to fruit is exceedingly common in Scripture because it is most suggestive, natural, and appropriate. As fruit is the production of the trees life and the end for which the tree exists, so obedience to the Divine will and holiness unto the Lord should be the product of mans life and for it he was at first created. When men plant trees in a vineyard, they very naturally expect to find fruit on them. And if at the age and season of fruit bearing they find no produce, their natural and justifiable expectation is disappointed.

Even thus, speaking after the manner of men, it is natural that the great Maker of all should look for the good fruit of obedience and love from the men who are the objects of His providential care and be grieved when He meets with no return. Man is very much more Gods property than a tree can ever be the property of the man who plants a vineyard. And as God has spent so much more skill and wisdom in the creation of a man than a farmer can have spent in the mere planting of trees, it becomes the more natural that God should look for fruit from His creature, man. And the more reasonable that His most righteous requirements should not be refused.

Trees that bear no fruit must be cut down. And sinners who bear no repentance, faith and holiness, must die. It is only a matter of time as to whether or not the vineyard shall be cleared of the encumbrance of its barren trees. And it is but a matter of time as to when the world shall be delivered from the burdensome presence of barren souls. It stands to reason that barren trees, which soon become the haunts of all sorts of mischievous creatures, should be a nuisance to the vineyard. Neither can sinners be permitted forever to become the dwelling places of evil spirits and the dens of iniquitya thorough riddance must be made of impenitent sinners as well as of rotten trees. There is a time for felling fruitless trees, and there is an appointed season for hewing down and casting into the fire the useless sinner.

I. We shall not linger on the threshold of our solemn work this morning, for our burden is very heavy and we would be rid of it speedily. We shall address ourselves at once to those persons who are living without God and without Christ, among whom many of my hearers must be numbered. We shall speak to those who are not savedthere are such in the professing Church everywhere. O may the Holy Spirit find them out by

our word and bring them in real earnest to consider their ways.

To all unprofitable, unfruitful sinners, we utter this hard, but needful sentenceTO CUT YOU DOWN WOULD BE MOST REASONABLE. It is right and reasonable to fell barren trees and it is just as right and reasonable that you should be cut down.

1. This will appear in the first place, if we reflect that this is the shortest and the surest way to deal with you. It will cost the least trouble and be most certainly effectual in removing you from the place to which you are an injury rather than a benefit. When the owner of the vineyard says to the gardener concerning the tree, Cut it down, the remedy is very sharp, but it is very simple. The felling is soon done, the clearance is thoroughand when another tree is planted the benefit is evident. To dig about the tree, to trench it, to feed it, to prune it and water itall this takes timerequiring care and labor and attention.

And, after all that, the process may fail and loves labor may be lost. To spare is difficult and involves trouble. To cut down is easy and effectual. Unconverted Hearer, to preach the Gospel to you, to call you to repentance, to entreat, exhort, instruct and warn you is a laborious process and will probably be unsuccessful, after all. The work will require much thought! Providential agencies must be directed with wisdom! Saints must pray with earnestness! Ministers must plead with tears! The Scriptures must be written and those Scriptures must be expounded and explained!

All this is more than you have any natural right to expect that God should do with you, when He has in His hands a far simpler remedy by which He may at once ease Himself of His adversary and prevent your being any further offenseHe has but to take away your breath and permit your body to descend into the grave and your soul into Hell and the vineyard is clear and there is room for another tree.

This sharp, short, simple process is one which commends itself to men in the case of trees. And it is one in which it is a thousand wonders that the Lord has not used with you! There will be no more blaspheming God, Sinner, when the axe has laid you low! There will be no more rejecting the promise of His mercy! No more violating Sundays! No more despising Scripture when the day of doom arrives! Death shall end all these abominations forever! We shall no more have to agonize for you in vain. No more shall we weep bitterly because of your hardness of heartno longer study to meet your objections and sigh at your constant oppositions.

The flames of Hell will end all this, to your sad and awful cost. No longer will a long-suffering God be wearied with your sins and pressed down under the load of your iniquities. He will make short work in righteousness and a clean work, too. He will sweep you away with the broom of destruction and your rebellions will end and your iniquities will receive a reward most sure and terrible! Barren fig tree, you will draw the fatness from the ground no longer and overshadow with evil influence your fellow trees no more! You are become a mere waste and worse than a waste.

Sinner, I ask you, is not the readiest plan to be rid of you suggested by the text, Cut it down? You yourself would do thus with a tree! What reason is there why the Lord should not deal thus with you? Do you argue that you are of far greater importance than a tree? How do you figure this? A tree is far more valuable to you than you can be supposed to be to the infinite God! The gardener would possibly lose something by cutting down his treebut how can you suppose that your ruin would be any damage to the great God?

The man who has many acres of vineyard is not much distressed if one barren vine is cut down, for there are so many more. If God had but one man in His dominions, it might seem to be of importance whether that man were saved or notbut there are so many of our race that your loss will be no more than the blowing of one atom of sand from the shore, or the removal of one drop from the sea! You yourself could not well complain of being cut down, for you do not think much of your own soulyou are not concerned about its salvationyou trifle with its best interests!

Why should you expect another to value you at a higher rate than you have set upon yourself? You fling away your soul for passing joys! You neglect the great salvation! You live in daily disobedience against God, who alone can do you good! Even the preaching of the Gospel, that all-powerful engine, seems to have no effect upon you because you despise yourself. Well, man, if God despises you, too, and commands His angels to cut you down, you cannot complainit is but reasonable that God should estimate you at your own price and weigh you in your own balances!

You have wantonly used the axe to yourself on many occasions. Why should not the proper Executioner use it in earnest? Some men ruin their health by their sins. They wildly dash the axe against their own roots and wound themselves terribly. On your soul you are using that axe continuallyfor you damage it by sin and seek out folly and the way to damnationand labor to be lost! You cannot, therefore, complain. The crushing of you will be of no more consequence in this great universe than the killing of some one ant upon the hill. You will never be missed! You may think greatly of yourself, but you are no more than a mere worm compared with the great universe of God.

Beware, O rebellious, unrepentant Sinner! My love yearns for your salvation, but my reason approves of your ruin! I foresee it and expect it speedily unless you turn unto the Lord and live.

2. Another reason makes the argument for judgment very powerful, namely, that sufficient space for repentance has already been given you! If there had been any hope of your repentance, I think many of you would have repented long ago. I do not know what can be done for some of you more than has been done. You have been dug aboutthe digging, I suppose, is to loosen the roots of their hold upon the earth. And you have had affliction, trial and troublelike the gardeners great spadeto wean you from earth and loosen your hold of carnal things. You have had sicknessyou have tossed to and fro upon the bed of pain.

You have been in the jaws of death and the horrid teeth seemed above and beneath you, as though they would enclose you foreverbut all this has been of no avail. Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more. Already some of you have been smitten until your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint, but you will not hear the rod. By the blueness of the wound, says Solomon, the heart is made better. But in your case it has not been so. Those blue wounds of yours

those great and grievous afflictionshave not been sanctified to you, but rather you have gone on offending God and provoking the Most High.

The gardener spoke of feeding as well as of digging and some of you have had plentiful helps towards repentance. The Gospel has been put close by your roots hundreds of times. You have a Bible in every house. You have had, some of you, the advantage of godly training from your youth up. You have been warned again and again and again, sometimes sternly, sometimes affectionately. You have heard the wooing voice of Mercy and the thundering notes of Judgment! But yet, though Jesus Christs own Gospel has been laid close to your roots, O barren Tree, you are barren still! What is the use, then, of sparing you?

Sparing has been tried and it has had no effectthe other remedy is certainCut it down. O God, cut not down the sinner! And yet we dare not say it would be unreasonable, but on the contrary, the most natural result of slighted mercy. O Sinner, you may well say

**I have long withstood His Grace,   
Long provoked Him to His face.   
Would not hearken to His calls,   
Grieved Him by a thousand falls.   
Depths of mercy! Can there be   
Mercy still reserved for me?   
Can my God His wrath forbear?   
Me, the chief of sinners spare?**   
3. Sinner, I argue your case somewhat harshly, you think. Ah, Man, would God I could make you think me harsh if you would but have pity on your own soul! For my harshness is only apparent, not real, and your carelessness for your soul is

real harshness, for you care not for your own soul but treat it as a thing to be cast away and its ruin to be laughed at, as though it were contemptible.   
And all this while there has been no sign of improvement whatever in you. If there had been some little fruit. If some tears of repentance had been flowing from your eyes. If there had been some seeking after Christ. If your heart had been a little softened. If you had but a little faith in Jesus, though it were but as a grain of mustard seed, then there were, indeed, reasons for sparing you! But, sorrowful to add, your sparing has had an ill effect upon you. Because God has not punished you, therefore you have waxed wanton and bold! You have said, Does God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?   
You think that He is altogether such an One as you are and that He will never bring you into judgment. You fancy that His sword is rusted into the scabbard and His arm waxed short. Strange madness of evil that you should pervert the long-suffering which calls you to repentance into a reason for running to greater lengths of sin! What? When Jehovah spares you that you may turn to Himshall that very sparing make you lift up the foot of your rebellion and spurn Him? It has done so. Up to this time you have grown hardened instead of softened. You have grown older, but you are no wiser, except it be with Satans subtlety to be more wise in sin. The Gospel has not now the effect it once had on you. This voice could make your soul shiver and your very blood chill in its veins, but it cannot do so now. These eyes have sometimes looked on you and seemed as though they flashed with firebut now they are dull as lead to you. Once, when we spoke to you of the wrath to come, the tears would flowthere were some tears of gentle pity for your own soul. But ah, it is not so with you now! You will go your way and our most earnest tones will seem but as the whistling wind and our most importunate entreaties as a childs playful song.   
O God, it is reasonable, indeed, that You should lift up that sharp axe of Yours and say, Cut it down. I think I could abundantly justify the severity of God, if now He were to use it, when I thus perceive that all His sparing has had no effect but to make you worse! When I perceive that, notwithstanding these years of waiting, there are no tokens of improvement in you, if He says, Cut it down, Justice and Reason say, yes, Lord, it is well it should be so.   
4. But there are other reasons why, Cut it down, is most reasonable, when we consider the Owner and the other trees. First of all, here is a tree which brings forth no fruit whatever and therefore is of no service. It is like money badly invested bringing in no interest. It is a dead loss to the owner. What is the use of keeping it? The dead tree is neither useful nor ornamentalit can yield no service and afford no pleasure. Cut it down, by all means!   
And even so with you, Sinner! What is the use of you? You are of use to your children, to your family. In business you may be of some service to the worldbut, then, the world did not make you! And your children and your familythey did not create you. God has made you. God has planted you. God is your proprietoryou have done nothing for God. Even in coming up to His House today, you did not come with any desire to honor Him. And tomorrow, if you should chance to give something to the poor, it will not be because they are Gods, nor out of love to Him. You neither pray to God, nor praise God, nor live for God.   
You live for anything, for everything, for nothing, sooner than live for the God that made you. Then what is the good of you to God? All His other creatures praise Him. There is not a spider spinning its web from leaf to leaf but does His bidding. The ox knows his owner and the ass his masters crib, but you do not know. Would you keep a horse that never did you service? Would you have a dog in your house that never licked your hand or fawned upon you, or did your will? You would say, What is the good of this? A servant in my house to feed upon my bread, to be clothed with my bounty, and yet never to obey me but to live in constant reckless disregard of my most reasonable commands!   
You would say to such a servant, Get out! You are no servant of mine. Well might the Lord say this to you! All these years preserving Goodness has winked at the past. Longsuffering has borne with your follies and your faultsbut it cannot be so forever, for reason demands that a useless thing should not always stand andCut it down, is the natural inference from the uselessness of your life.   
Nor is this all. While you have been thus living without yielding anything, you have been a very costly tree. The tree in the vineyard does not cost much except to dig about it and to feed it and to prune it. There is, of course, the expense of the gardener who has to watch over it, but this is very little. You may let the barren tree stand, for it is no great expense.   
But see what it costs to keep you! You have to be daily fed. The breath in  
your nostrils must come from God every moment. There has to be an   
emanation from Omnipotence at every single tick of that clock, or else you   
would not live.   
The complicated machinery of the human body needs to be tended and   
kept in order by the great Master Craftsman, or else before long the cogs  
would cease to act upon one another and the wheels would be broken and   
the whole machine would be put out of gear. Your body is a mass of thousands of stringsand fails if one is gone. The good harpist must watch   
with sedulous care to prevent the strings from snapping.   
You cost God much patience, much bounty, much skill, much power.   
Why should He spare you? What is there in you that He should go on with   
you in this manner? You would not spare the gnat that was always stinging you, buzzing in your face and every moment insulting you. If it cost  
you much of your poor gold to spare that poor gnats life, you would not  
be long about ityou would crush it! And oh, it is a marvel that Jehovah  
does not deal thus with you, for you are more impertinent than that gnat   
could be! Sinner, if you were in Gods place and were as ill-treated by your   
creature as the Lord is by you, would you lavish love and goodness upon   
him to receive hardness of heart and rebellion in return? Assuredly not!   
Judge, then, whether it is not right that the Lord should say, Cut it   
down.   
But there is a worse consideration, namely, that all this while you have   
been filling up space which somebody might have been filling to the glory   
of God. Where that barren tree stands there might have been a tree loaded   
with fruit. You are using up the ground, as the text says, that is, doing  
nothing but just being a cumbersome nuisance. If another mother had   
those children, she would pray for them and weep over them and teach  
them of Christbut you do no such thing. If another man had that money   
it would be laid out for Gods glorybut you lay it out for your own pleasure and forget the God who gave it to you!   
If another had sat in that seat which you occupy, it may be that he had   
long ago repented in sackcloth and ashes! But you, like the men of   
Capernaum, have been hardened, instead of being softened under the   
Gospel. It may be, man of influence, if another had stood where you have   
stood in the worlds judgment, he would have led hundreds in the path of   
rightbut you, standing there, have done no such thing! Oh, if another  
had your gifts, young man, he would not be making a company laugh at  
the tavern, but pleading with all his might for Jesus! If another had but   
your gifts of utterance he would be spending in prayer and teaching what   
you now spend in fun and frolic to make amusement for fools. Oh, if another had that time to live in, he would live in earnest for his   
Master. If that young saint, just going through the flood, had your health  
and vigor, how would he spend and be spent! I recollect a minister of   
Christ who had but one talent, but much heart. I remember hearing him   
pray this prayerO God, I wish I had ten talents, that I might serve You   
better. When I think of some that have them and do not serve my Master  
with them, I am inclined to pray, Lord take away their ten talents and trust me with them if You will, for I do desire to have something more to lay out for You.   
Take heed, O my dear, but sinful Hearer, lest the Lord remove you suddenly and fill up your place with one who will be obedient to His will. Moreover and to make bad worse even to the worst degreeall this while ungodly men are spreading an evil influence. Thinking over the two lines of the verse we have been singing, I felt a horror of great darkness as I realized fully their solemn truthfulness with regard to some of you *I have shed His precious blood,   
Trampled on the Son of God.   
Filled with pains unspeakable   
I who yet am not in Hell.*   
Well may the question ariseWhy to me this waste of love? It is so apparently a waste of long-suffering and mercy that some transgressors should be spared at all, that they may well marvel. Look at it, and I think you will see it very clearlythe very fact that God does not punish sin on the spot is mischievously interpreted. Men in all ages have drawn a wicked inference from the patience of the great Judge. The Preacher, in Ecclesiastes, says, Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Why, you say, So-and-So drinks and swears and he has lived to be a hale, hearty old man. He has plunged into all sorts of folly and wickedness. He was a thief and everything bad besides, and yet he prospers in the world and grows rich. Instead of God sinking him down at once to Hell, He has favored him and fattened him as a bullock in rich pasture. Oh, the worldling says, there is no justice in God. He does not punish sin.   
The very fact that you are spared, O Sinner, is doing mischief in the world. Do you see that? Your mere existence in this world is to others an inducement to continue in sin! While you are spared, others look at you and say, God has not punished

him. Therefore they infer that He will not punish sin at all. Moreover, how many there are of you whose example is fearfully contagiouswhose lips and lives combine to lead your associates astray from God? In this dreadful disease which has ravaged our fields and destroyed the cattle, farmers have been advised as soon as ever the cow is attacked with the disease, to kill it on the spot and bury it five feet deep out of the way.   
Let us reflect that the murrain of sin is much more pestilential and more certain to kill than this murrain among the cattle and therefore stern Justice cries, Let the sinner be at once sent where He cannot increase the plague of iniquityit is of no use sparing himhe grows no better. All the means used only make him worse and meanwhile we must look to the welfare of others, lest he perish not alone in his iniquity. He teaches his children to swear! He makes others worldly! The whole current of his life is to incite men to rebel against Godlet his desperate course be stopped at once. The leprosy is upon him and all that he touches he pollutesfor high sanitary reasons, therefore, he must be removed. It is better that one die than that many should be smitten and therefore the highest consideration for the good of mankind in general renders it necessary that the mandate should go forth, Cut it down.   
II. The second most solemn work is to remind you, O impenitent Sinner, that FOR GOD TO HAVE SPARED YOU SO LONG IS A VERY WONDERFUL THING. That the infinitely just and holy God should have spared you, unconverted man, unconverted woman, up till now, is no small timing but a matter for adoring wonder. Let me show you this. Consider, negatively, God is not sparing you because He is insensible towards your sinsHe is angry with the wicked every day. If the Lord could be indifferent towards sin and could bring His holy mind to treat it as a mere trifle, then it would be no wonder that He should let the transgressor live. But He cannot endure iniquityall the day long His anger smokes and burns towards evil and yet He holds back the thunderbolt and does not smite the guilty. If you had been angry for half-an-hour, you would have come to hard words or blows. But here is the Judge of all the earth angry every day for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, or eighty years with some of you and yet He has not destroyed you! It is not because the offense is at a distance and therefore far from His observant eyes. Noyour sins are like smoke in His noseyour iniquities provoke Him to His face! You touch the apple of His eye and yet, for all that, though this accursed thing called sin intrudes into His Presence every instant, yet still He has spared you until now!   
Mark, Sinner, He has spared you not because He was unable to have destroyed you. He might have bid the tiles fall from the roof, or the fever might have killed you in the street. The air might have refused to heave your lungs, or the blood might have ceased its circulation in your veins. The gates to death are many. The quiver of Judgment is full of sharp arrows. The Lord has but to will it and your soul is required of you. He said to the foolish rich man, This night your soul shall be required of you, and he never saw the morning. And He might as easily have sent the same sad message to you, and what then?   
As I have said before, this great patience is not manifested towards your sinful soul because the Lord is at all dependent upon youyour living will not increase and your dying will not diminish His Glory! You will be no more missed than one sere leaf is missed in a forest, or one dewdrop in a thousand leagues of grass. Judgment needs but a word to work its utmost vengeance and you are so provoking that the marvel is that Divine severity has spared you so long! Admire and wonder at this longsuffering. Remember that this wonder is increased when you think of the fruit He deserved to have had of you. A God so good and so gracious ought to have been loved by you. He has treated you so well and given you such capacities for pleasure that He ought to have had some service of you. You are not to God what the ox is to its owneryou give to the ox but his grass or his straw and you have done with him. But God gives to you not only your daily food, but your very lifeyou are wholly dependent upon Him! Nothing can be so much yours as you are Gods. You ought to have served Him, to have delighted in that service, to spend and to have been spent for your Lord! He asks no more of you than He ought to have had and yet He asks you to love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your strengththis was His first and great commandment and this you have constantly, persistently broken.   
Oh, think, then, when you have given to God such a bad return, when He ought to have received so much betterthink, I pray you, how you must have provoked Him! And ah, my Hearers! I have to touch upon a very solemn part of the business now when I notice again that some, perhaps here present, have been guilty of very God-provoking sins. Some offenses provoke God much more than othersI believe that cursing does, for it is wanton insolence by which nothing can be gained. It is altogether a gratuitous piece of insult. To swear, to imprecate the curse of God upon ones limbs and souls, is an unnecessary, superfluous sin.   
There cannot be any pleasure in pronouncing oaths any more than in uttering any other form of words. It is just because man will hate his Maker and will provoke Him, that he does this. O Sinner, did you ever ask God to damn you and are you not astonished that He has not done it? Did you ever desire that the blast should come upon you and do you not marvel that He has not long ago swept you where His wrath would wither you forever? Swearing is a sin that provokes the Most High! O Sinner, abhor this most detestable of vices!   
Infidelity, and how many are guilty of that? How provoking to God for a man to deny His very existence! Standing up and breathing Gods air and living upon Gods life and yet saying that there is no God? An insignificant worm dares challenge the Almighty to prove His Godhead and existence by a tremendous act of justice. This is a God-provoking sin. So again is persecution. There may be some here present who have persecuted wife and child because of their following Christ. He that touches you touches the apple of My eye, says God. Beware, Sinneryou will not touch the Lords eye long without feeling His heavy hand!   
If any man injures your children, the blood is in your cheek at once! If you are a father you feel that you will show yourself strong in their defenseeven so the heavenly Father will avenge His own elect. Therefore, take heed lest you persevere in this Heaven-provoking sin. And slander, toolying against Gods servantsinventing and spreading wicked tales against those who walk in Gods fear. This is another evil which awakens the anger of God and stirs up righteous fury against the man who is guilty of it. Beware! Beware!   
Filthiness, filthiness of body and of life, will also provoke the Most Holy One. This once brought Hell out of Heaven upon Sodom! God sent down fire and brimstone because of the lusts of the flesh that made Sodom to stink in His nostrils. The harlot and the adulterer and the fornicator shall know that they sin not without provoking God very terribly. And let me add here among these God-provoking sins there is that quenching of conscience of which some of you have been guilty. Ah, my dear Hearers, there are not many of you to whom I spoke under these first heads, for I know that very few of you would indulge in these grosser sins!   
But there are some of you quite as bad in another sense, for you know the right and choose the wrong! You hear of Christ and do not give your hearts to Him. We had hoped of some of you that long before this we should have seen you walking in the Lords fear. But you are still strangers to Christ. You must have had hard work to do this. You must have had a terrible tug with conscience, some of you! I know you have been stifling many a holy desire and when the Spirit of God has been striving with you, you have been so desperately set on mischief that still you have gone on in the error of your ways.   
Now these sins provoke God. I do not believe that I stand in this pulpit and plead with you in Gods name and then go back and tell my Master that you have rejected His warnings without Gods being angry with your hardness of heart and stiff necks. I know if we send an Ambassador to a foreign court to try and make peace and he honestly and earnestly lays down proper stipulations for peace, if they are rejected, you will soon find the newspapers and public opinion ringing with indignation. Why, they say, will not the men have peace when the terms are so reasonable? Get out the iron-dads, let them have warwar to the knife. If they will not yield to what is reasonable, thus let us dress ourselves in thunder and go forth across the sea.   
And what do you think? Shall God be always provoked? Shall mercy be preached to you in vain forever? Shall Christ be presented and always rejected and will you continue to be His enemies and shall He never proclaim war against your souls? It is a marvel! It is a wonder that these God-provoking sins have so long been borne with, and that you are not yet cut down!   
III. And now, WHAT IS THE REASON FOR ALL THIS LONGSUFFERING? Why is it that this tree has not been cut down? The answer is because there is One who pleads for sinners. I have shown you, and some of you will think I have shown you with very great severity, too, how reasonable it is that you should be cut down. I wish you felt it, for if you felt how reasonable it was that God should send you to Hell, then you would begin to tremble and there would be some hope for you! I can assure you I have trembled for you when I have thought how rational, how justno, it would seem to me, how necessary it was that some of you should be lostit has made me tremble for you, and I would to God you would tremble for yourselves! But what has been the secret cause that you have been kept alive? The answer is Jesus Christ has pleaded for you! The crucified Savior has interfered for you! And you ask me, Why? I answer, because Jesus Christ has an interest in you all. We do not believe in general redemption, but we believe in every word of this precious Bibleand there are many passages in the Scripture which seem to show that Christs death had an universal bearing upon the sons of men. We are told that He tasted death for every man. What does that mean? Does it mean that Jesus Christ died to

save every man? I do not believe it does, for it seems to me that everything which Christ intended to accomplish by the act of His death He must accomplish or else He will be defeated, which is not supposable. Those whom Christ died to save I believe He will save effectually, through His substitutionary sacrifice. But did He in any other sense die for the rest of mankind?   
He did. Nothing can be much more plain in Scripture, it seems to me, than that all sinners are spared as the result of Jesus Christ death. And this is the sense in which men are said to trample on the blood of Jesus Christ. We read of some who denied the Lord that bought them. No one who is bought with blood for eternal salvation ever tramples on that bloodbut Jesus Christ has shed His blood for the reprieve of men that they may be sparedand those who turn Gods sparing mercy into an occasion for fresh sin do trample on the blood of Jesus Christ. You can hold that doctrine without holding universal redemption, or without at all contradicting that undoubted Truth of God that Jesus laid down His life for His sheep and that where He suffered He suffered not in vain. Now, Sinner, whether you know it or not, you are indebted to Him that did hang upon the tree for the breath that is now in you. You had not been on praying ground and pleading terms with God this morning if it had not been for that dear suffering One. Our text represents the gardener as only asking to have it sparedbut Jesus Christ did something more than askHe pleaded, not with His mouth only, but with pierced hands and pierced feet, and pierced side. And those prevailing pleas have moved the heart of God, and you are yet spared. May I speak to you, then? If your life had been spared, when you were condemned to die, by my interventionsuppose such a casewould you despise me?   
If I had power at the Court and when you were condemned to die, had gone in and pleaded for you and you had been reprievedyear after year would you hate me? Would you speak against me? Would you rail at my character? Would you find fault with my friends? I know you betteryou would love me! You would be grateful for the sparing of your life. O Sinner, I would you would treat the Lord Jesus as you would treat man! I would you would think of the Lord Jesus Christ as you would think of your fellow man who had delivered you from death!  
You are not in Hell where you would have been if He had not come in and pleaded for you. I do beseech you, think of the misery of lost souls and recollect that you would have been in such a woeful case yourself this morning if He had not lifted up that hand once pierced for human sin. There, there, where the flames can no abatement know, where a drop of water is a gift too great to be receivedthere, where hope is excluded and despair sits upon a throne of iron, binding captive souls in everlasting bandswhere Forever! is written on the fire and Forever! is printed on the chain and Forever! Forever! Forever! rings out as the awful deathknell of everything like hope and restthere you would have been this morningthis morningif sparing Grace had not prevented! Where are your companions, your old companions? You sat in the pothouse with them. They are in Hell, but you are not. When you were younger you sinned with them and they are lost, but you are not. Why this difference? Why are they cast away and you spared? I can only ascribe it to the gracious long-suffering of Jehovah. O, I pray you look at Him who spared you and weep and mourn for your sins! May the Spirit of God come down on you this morning and draw you to the foot of His dear Cross! And as you see the blood which has spared your blood and the death which has made you live until now, I do trust that the Divine Spirit may make you fall down and say, O Jesus, how can I offend You? How can I stand out against You? Accept me and save me for Your mercys sake.   
While I have thus spoken of the general interest which Christ has in you all, I have good hope that Christ has a special interest in some of you! I hope that He has specially redeemed you from among men and bought you not with silver and gold, but with His own precious blood, having loved you with an everlasting love. I trust He intends with the bands of His kindness to draw you this morning. Oh, says one, I cannot think that such can be the case! But suppose you were to find out before long that you were chosen of God and dear to Christ and were to be a jewel in His crown foreverwhat would you say, then, of yourself?   
I would mourn that I could ever have hated Him that loved me so well! Oh, that I could ever have stood out against Him that was determined to save me! What a fool I was to quarrel with Him who had paid my price and chosen me by His Grace and taken me to be married unto Himself forever!   
I tell you that God will forgive you, but you will never forgive yourselves for having stood out and resisted so long. Oh, may eternal Mercy, which has not yet said, Cut it down, now dig about you and feed you that you may bring forth fruitand then it shall be all to the praise of Him whose precious blood has saved us from eternal wrath. May God bless these feeble words of mine. He knows how I meant themhow I meant to speak them, how I meant to have wept over you, how I wanted that my soul should heave with passionate desire for your conversionbut if there have been no such outward manifestations, yet I pray God that the Truth itself may be irresistible and may He get to Himself the victory and His shall be the praise, forevermore. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1426 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE LIFTING UP OF THE BOWED DOWN   
NO. 1426

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, JULY 14, 1878, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together,   
and could in no wise lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her, He called her**

**to Him, and said unto her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.   
Luke 13:10-13.**

I BELIEVE that the infirmity of this woman was not only physical but spiritual. Her outward appearance was the index of her deep and longcontinued depression of mind. She was bent double as to her body and she was bowed down by sadness as to her mind. There is always a sympathy between body and soul, but it is not always so plainly seen as in her case. Many sad sights would meet us on all hands if it were so. Imagine for a moment what would be the result upon the present congregation if our outward forms were to set forth our inward states. If someone having an eye like that of the Savior could gaze upon us, now, and could see the inward in the outward, what would be the appearance of this crowd?

Very deplorable sights would be seen, for in many a pew dead persons would be sitting, looking forth from the glassy eyes of death, bearing the semblance of life and a name to live, but all the while being dead as to spiritual things! My Friend, you would shudder as you found yourself placed next to a corpse! Alas, the corpse would not shudder, but would remain as insensible as ungodly persons usually are, though the precious Truth of the Gospel rings in their earsears which hear but hear in vain. A large number of souls will be found in all congregations, dead in trespasses and sins, and yet sitting as Gods people sit and not to be discerned from the living in Zion!

Even in those cases in which there is spiritual life, the aspect would not be altogether lovely. Here we should see a man blind and there, another maimed, and a third twisted from perfect uprightness. Spiritual deformity assumes many forms and each form is painful to look upon. A paralyzed man with a trembling faith, set forth by a trembling body, would be an uncomfortable neighbor. A person subject to fits of passion or despair would be equally undesirable if his body also suffered from fits. How sad it would be to have around us persons with a fever upon them, or shivering with malaria, hot and cold by turns, burning almost to fanaticism at one moment and then chilled as with a northern wind with utter indifference.

I will not try to sketch in further detail the crippled, lame, blind and impotent folks who are assembled in this Bethesda. Surely if the flesh were shaped according to the spirit, this Tabernacle would be turned into an hospital and each man would flee from his fellow and wish to run from

himself! If to any one of us our inward ailments were to be set forth upon our brow, I guarantee you we should not linger long at the mirror, nor scarcely dare to think upon the wretched objects which our eyes would behold there. Let us quit the imaginary scene with this consoling thoughtJesus is among us, notwithstanding that we are sick! And although He sees nothing to delight His eyes if He judges us according to the Law, yet, since His mercy delights to relieve human misery, there is abundant scope for Him here in the midst of these thousands of ailing souls!

In that synagogue on the Sabbath, this poor woman described in the text must have been one of the least observed. Her particular disease would render her very short in stature. She was dwarfed to almost half her original height and, in consequence, like other very short persons, she would be almost lost in a standing crowd. A person so bent down as she was might have come in and gone out and not have been noticed by anyone standing upon the floor of the meeting place. But I can imagine that our Lord occupied a somewhat elevated position, as He was teaching in the synagogue, for He had probably gone to one of the higher places for the greater convenience of being seen and heard. And for this reason He could more readily see her than others could.

Jesus always occupies a place from which He can spy out those who are bowed down. His quick eyes did not miss its mark. She, poor soul, was naturally the least observed of all the people in the company, yet she was the most observed, for our Lords gracious eyes glanced over all the rest and lighted upon her with fixed regard. There His tender look remained till He had worked the deed of love. Perhaps there is someone in the crowd, this morning, the least observed of anybody, who is yet noticed by the Savior! Remember, He sees not as man sees, but observes most those whom man passes over as beneath his regard. Nobody knows you, nobody cares for you. Your peculiar trouble is quite unknown and you would not reveal it for the world. You feel quite alone! There is no solitude like that which is to be found in a dense throng and you are in that solitude now.

Be not, however, quite despairing, for you have a Friend left. The preachers heart is going after you, but that will little help youthere is far more joy in the fact that as our Master observed most, the least observed one on that Sabbath in the synagogue, so we trust He will do, this day, and His eyes shall light on you, even you! He will not pass you by, but will deal out a special Sabbath blessing to your weary heart. Though by yourself accounted to be among the last, you shall now be put upon the first by the Lords working a notable miracle of love upon you! In the hope that this may be so, we will proceed, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to look into the gracious deed which was done to this poor woman.

I. Our first subject for consideration is THE BOWING DOWN OF THE AFFLICTED. We read of this woman, she had a spirit of infirmity and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up. Upon which we remark, first, that she had lost all her natural brightness. I can imagine that when she was a girl she was light of foot as a young roe, that her face was dimpled with many a smile and that her eyes flashed with childish glee. She had her share of the brightness and beauty of youth and walked erect like others of her race, looking up to the sun by day and to the sparkling stars at night, rejoicing in all around her and feeling life to be a joy.

But there gradually crept over her an infirmity which dragged her down, probably a weakness of the spineeither the muscles and ligatures began to tighten so that she was bound together and drawn more and more towards herself and towards the earthor else the muscles commenced to relax, so that she could not retain the perpendicular position and her body dropped forward more and more. I suppose either of these causes might cause her to be bowed together, so that she could in nowise lift herself up. At any rate, for 18 years she had not gazed upon the sun! For 18 years no star of night had gladdened her eyes! Her face was drawn downward towards the dust and all the light of her life was dim. She walked about as if she were searching for a grave and I do not doubt she often felt that it would have been gladness to have found one! She was as truly fettered as if bound in iron and as much in prison as if surrounded by stone walls.

Alas, we know certain of the children of God who are at this moment in much the same condition! They are perpetually bowed down and though they remember happier days, the memory only serves to deepen their present gloom. They sometimes sing in the minor key

*Where is the blessedness I knew   
When first I saw the Lord?   
Where is the sweet refreshing view   
Of Jesus and His Word?   
What blissful hours I then enjoyed!   
How sweet their memory still!   
But they have left an aching void   
The world can never fill.*

They seldom enter into communion with Godseldom or never behold the face of the Well-Beloved. They try to hold on by believing and they succeed. But they have little peace, little comfort, little joythey have lost the crown and flower of spiritual life, though that life still remains.

I feel certain that I am addressing more than two or three who are in such a plight at this moment and I pray the Comforter to bless my discourse to them. This poor woman was bowed towards herself and towards that which was depressing. She seemed to grow downwardsher life was stooping! She bent lower and lower and lower, as the weight of years pressed upon her. Her looks were all earthwardnothing heavenly, nothing bright could come before her eyesher views were narrowed to the dust and to the grave. So are there some of Gods people whose thoughts sink always like lead and their feelings run in a deep groove, always cutting a lower channel. You cannot give them delight, but you can readily cause them alarm! By a strange art they squeeze the juice of sorrow from the clusters of Eshcol. Where others would leap for joy, they stoop for very grief, for they draw the unhappy inference that joyous things are not meant for the likes of them.

Cordials expressly prepared for mourners, they dare not accept and the more comforting they are, the more are they afraid to appropriate them. If there is a dark passage in the Word of God, they are sure to read it and

say, That applies to me. If there is a thundering portion in a sermon, they remember every syllable of it and although they wonder how the preacher knows them so well, yet they are sure that he aimed every word at them! If anything occurs in Providence, either adverse or propitious, instead of reading it as a token for good, whether they might rationally do so or not, they manage to translate it into a sign of evil. All these things are against me, they say, for they can see nothing but the earth and can imagine nothing but fear and distress.

We have known certain prudent, but somewhat unfeeling persons blame these people and chide them for being low spirited. And that brings us to notice, next, that she could not lift herself up. There was no use in blaming her. There may have been a time, perhaps, when her older sisters said, Sister, you should keep yourself more upright! You should not be so round shouldered. You are getting quite out of figureyou must be careful or you will become deformed. Dear me, what good advice some people can give! Advice is usually given free and this is very proper since in most cases that is its full value! Advice given to persons who become depressed in spirit is usually unwise and causes pain and aggravation of spirit. I sometimes wish that those who are so ready with their advice had themselves suffered a little, for then, perhaps, they would have the wisdom to hold their tongues. Of what use is it to advise a blind person to see, or to tell one who cannot lift herself up that she ought to be upright and should not look so much upon the earth? This is a needless increase of misery! Some persons who pretend to be comforters might more fitly be classed with tormentors.

A spiritual infirmity is as real as a physical one. When Satan binds a soul it is as truly bound as when a man binds an ox or an ass. It cannot get free. It is of necessity in bondage and that was the condition of this poor woman. I may be speaking to some who have bravely attempted to rally their spiritsthey have tried change of scenery, they have gone into godly company, they have asked Christian people to comfort themthey have frequented the House of God and read consoling books. But they are still bound and there is no disputing it. As one that pours vinegar upon niter, so is he that sings songs to a sad heartthere is an incongruity about the choicest joys when forced upon broken spirits.

Some distressed souls are so sick that they abhor all manner of meat and draw near unto the gates of death. Yet, if any one of my hearers is in this plight, he need not despair, for Jesus can lift up those who are most bowed down! The worst point, perhaps, about the poor womans case was that she had borne her trouble for 18 years and, therefore, her disease was chronic and her illness confirmed. Eighteen years! It is a long, long time! Eighteen years of happiness!the years fly like Mercuries with wings on their heelsthey come and they are gone! Eighteen years of happy lifehow short a span!

But eighteen years of pain! Eighteen years of being bowed down to the earth. Eighteen years in which the body approximated rather to the fashion of a brute than to that of a manwhat a period this must be! Eighteen long yearseach with 12 dreary months dragging like a chain behind it! She had been 18 years under the bond of the devilwhat a woe was this! Can a child of God be 18 years in despondency? I am bound to answer, yes! There is one instance, that of Mr. Timothy Rogers, who has written a book upon Religious Melancholy, a very wonderful book, too, who was, I think, 28 years in despondency. He tells the story himself and there can be no question as to his accuracy. Similar instances are well known to those familiar with religious biographies. Individuals have been locked up for many years in the gloomy den of despair and yet, after all, have been singularly brought out into joy and comfort.

Eighteen years despondency must be a frightful affliction and yet there is an escape out of it, for though the devil may take 18 years to forge a chain, it does not take our blessed Lord 18 minutes to break it! He can soon set the captive free! Build, build your dungeons, O Fiend of Hell, and lay the foundations deep and place the courses of granite so fast together that none can stir a stone of your fabricbut when HE comes, your Master who will destroy all your worksHE does but speak and like the unsubstantial fabric of a vision, your Bastille vanishes into thin air! Eighteen years of melancholy do not prove that Jesus cannot set the captive free they only offer Him an opportunity for displaying His gracious power!

Note further about this poor woman, that bowed down as she was, both in mind and body, she yet frequented the House of Prayer. Our Lord was in the synagogue and there was she! She might very well have said, It is very painful for me to go into a public place. I ought to be excused. But no, there she was! Dear child of God, the devil has sometimes suggested to you that it is vain for you to go anymore to hear the Word of God. Go just the same! He knows you are likely to escape from his hands so long as you hear the Word and, therefore, if he can keep you away, he will do so. It was while in the House of Prayer that this woman found her liberty! And there you may find it! Therefore continue to go up to the House of the Lord, come what may.

All this while, too, she was a daughter of Abraham. The devil had tied her up like an ox or an ass, but he could not take away her privileged character. She was still a daughter of Abraham, still a believing soul trusting in God by humble faith. When the Savior healed her, He did not say, Your sins are forgiven you. There was no particular sin in the case. He did not address her as He did those whose infirmity had been caused by sin, for, notwithstanding her being thus bowed down, all she needed was

comfort, not rebuke. Her heart was right with God. I know it was, for the moment she was healed she began to glorify God, which showed that she was ready for it and that the praise was waiting in her spirit for the glad opportunity!

In going up to the House of God, she felt some measure of comfort, though for 18 years she was bowed down. Where else could she have gone? What good could she have gained by staying at home? A sick child is best in its fathers house and she was best where prayer was known to be made. Here, then, is a picture of what may still be seen among the sons of men and may possibly be your case, dear Hearer. May the Holy Spirit bless this description to your hearts encouragement. II. I invite you, secondly, to notice THE HAND OF SATAN IN THIS

BONDAGE. We should not have known it if our Lord had not told us, that it was Satan who had bound this poor woman for 18 years! He must have bound her very cunningly to make the knot hold all that time, for he does not appear to have possessed her. You notice, in reading the Evangelists, that our Lord never laid His hand on a person possessed with a devil! Satan had not possessed her, but he had fallen upon her once upon a time 18 years before and bound her up as men tie a beast in its stable. And she had not been able to get free all that while. The devil can tie, in a moment, a knot which you and I cannot unloose in 18 years!

He had, in this case, so securely fastened his victim that no power of herself or others could helpin the same way, when permitted, he can tie up any one of Gods own people in a very short time and by almost any means. Perhaps one word from a preacher, which was never meant to cause sadness, may make a heart wretched. One single sentence out of a good book, or one misunderstood passage of Scripture may be quite enough, in Satans cunning hand, to fasten up a child of God in a long bondage. Satan had bound the woman to herself and to the earth.

There is a cruel way of tying a beast which is somewhat after the same fashionI have seen a poor animals head fastened to its knee or foot and somewhat after that fashion Satan had bound the woman downward to herself. So there are some children of God whose thoughts are all about themselvesthey have turned their eyes so that they look inside and see only the transactions of the little world within themselves. They are always lamenting their own infirmities, always mourning their own corruptions, always watching their own emotions. The one and only subject of their thoughts is their own condition! If they ever change the scene and turn to another subject, it is only to gaze upon the earth beneath them, to groan over this poor world with its sorrows, its miseries, its sins and its disappointments. Thus they are tied to themselves and to the earth and cannot look up to Christ as they should, nor let the sunlight of His love shine fully upon them.

They go mourning without the sun, pressed down with cares and burdens. Our Lord uses the figure of an ox or an ass tied up and He says that even on the Sabbath its owner could loose it for watering. This poor woman was restrained from what her soul needed. She was like an ass or an ox which cannot get to the trough to drink. She knew the promises, she heard them read every Sabbath. She went to the synagogue and heard of Him who comes to loose the captives, but she could not rejoice in the promise or enter into liberty. So are there multitudes of Gods dear people who are fastened to themselves and cannot get to watering, cannot drink from the River of Life, nor find consolation in the Scriptures. They know how precious the Gospel is and how consolatory are the blessings of the Covenant, but they cannot enjoy the consolations or the blessings. Oh that they could! They sigh and cry, but they feel themselves to be bound.

There is a saving clause here. Satan had done a good deal to the poor woman, but he had done all he could do. You may rest assured that whenever Satan smites a child of God, he never spares his strength. He knows nothing of mercy, neither does any other consideration restrain him. When the Lord delivered Job into Satans hand for a time, what destruction and havoc he made with Jobs property! He did not save him chick or child, or sheep, or goat, or camel, or ox. He smote him right and left and caused ruin to Jobs whole estate. When, under a second permit, he came to touch him in his bone and in his flesh, nothing would satisfy the devil but covering Job from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head with boils and blisters.

He might have pained him quite sufficiently by torturing one part of his body, but this would not suffice. He must glut himself with vengeance! The devil would do all he could and, therefore, he covered him with running sores. Yet, as in Jobs case, there was a limit, so was there here Satan had bound this woman, but he had not killed her. He might bend her towards the grave, but he could not bend her into it. He might make her droop over till she was bent double, but he could not take away her poor feeble life! With all his infernal craft, he could not make her die before her time! Moreover, she was still a woman and he could not make a beast of her, notwithstanding that she was thus bowed down into the form of a brute.

Even so the devil cannot destroy you, O child of God! He can smite you, but he cannot slay you. He worries those whom he cannot destroy and feels a malicious joy in doing so. He knows there is no hope of your destruction, for you are beyond shot of his gun, but if he cannot wound you with the shot, he will frighten you with the powder if he can! If he cannot slay, he will bind, as if for the slaughteryes, and he knows how to make a poor soul feel a thousand deaths in fearing one! But all this while, Satan was quite unable to touch this poor woman as to her true standingshe was a daughter of Abraham 18 years before, when the devil first attacked her and she was a daughter of Abraham 18 years afterwards, when the fiend had done his worst!

And you, dear heart, if you should never have a comfortable sense of the Lords love for 18 years, are still His beloved! And if never once He should give you any token of His love which you could sensibly enjoy and, if by reason of bewilderment and distraction, you should keep on writing bitter things against yourself all this while, yet still your name is on the hands of Christ where none can erase it! You belong to Jesus and none shall pluck you out of His hands! The devil may bind you fast, but Christ has bound you faster, still, with cords of everlasting love which must and shall hold you to the end!

That poor woman was being prepared, even by the agency of the devil, to glorify God! Nobody in the synagogue could glorify God as she could when she was, at last, set free! Every year out of the 18 gave emphasis to the utterance of her thanksgiving! The deeper her sorrow the sweeter her song! I should like to have been there that morning, to have heard her tell the story of the emancipating power of the Christ of God! The devil must have felt that he had lost all his trouble and he must have regretted that he had not let her alone all the 18 years, since he had only been qualifying her, thereby, to tell out more sweetly the story of Jesus wondrous power!   
III. I want you to notice, in the third place, THE LIBERATOR AT HIS

WORK. We have seen the woman bound by the devil, but here comes the Liberator! And the first thing we read of Him is that He saw her. His eyes looked round, reading every heart as He glanced from one to another. At last He saw the woman! Yes, that was the very one He was seeking! We are not to think that He saw her in the same common way as I see one of you, but He read every line of her character and history, every thought of her heart, every desire of her soul! Nobody had told Him that she had been bound 18 years, but He knew all about ithow she came to be bound, what she had suffered during the time, how she had prayed for healing and how the infirmity still pressed upon her.

In one minute He had read her history and understood her case. He saw her and oh, what meaning there was in His searching glance! Our Lord had wonderful eyes! All the painters in the world will never be able to produce a satisfactory picture of Christ because they cannot copy those expressive eyes! Heaven lay calmly reposing in His eyesthey were not only bright and penetrating, but they were full of a melting powera tenderness irresistible, a strength which secured confidence. As He looked at the poor woman I doubt not the tears started from our Lords eyes, but they were not tears of unmingled sorrow, for He knew that He could heal her and He anticipated the joy of doing so!

When He had gazed upon her, He called her to Him. Did He know her name? Oh, yes, He knows all our names and His calling is therefore personal and unmistakable. I have called you by your name, says He, you are Mine. Look, there is the poor creature coming up the aisle! That pitiful mass of sorrow, though bowed to the earth, is moving! Is it a woman? You can hardly see that she has a face, but she is coming towards Him who called her. She could not stand upright, but she could come as she wasbent and infirm as she was! I rejoice in my Masters way of healing people, for He comes to them where they are. He does not propose to them that if they will do something He will do the rest, but He begins and ends!

He bids them approach Him as they are and does not ask them to mend or prepare. May my blessed Master, this morning, look on some of you till you feel, The preacher means me, the preachers Master means me! And then may there sound a voice in your ears saying, Come to Jesus just as you are. Then may you have Grace to reply

*Just as I ampoor, wretched, blind,   
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,   
Yes, all I need, in You to find,   
O Lamb of God, I come.*   
When the woman came, the great Liberator said to her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. How could that be true? She was still as bent as she was before! He meant that the spell of Satan was taken off from her, that the power which had made her thus to bow herself was broken. This she believed in her inmost soul, even as Jesus said it, though as yet she was not at all different in appearance from her former state. Oh, that some of you who are Gods dear people would have power to believe this morning that the end of your gloom has comepower to believe that your 18 years are overand that youre time of doubt and despondency is ended! I pray that God may give you Grace to know that when this mornings sun first gilded, the east light was ordained for you! Behold, I come today to publish the glad message from the Lord! Come forth, you prisoners! Leap you captives, for Jesus comes to set you free today! The woman was liberated, but she could not actually enjoy the liberty and I will tell you why directly. Our Lord proceeded to give her full enlargement in His own wayHe laid His hands on her. She suffered from lack of strength and by putting His hands upon her, I conceive that the Lord poured His life into her.

The warm stream of His own infinite power and vitality came into contact with the lethargic stream of her painful existence and so quickened it that she lifted herself up! The deed of love was doneJesus Himself had done it! Beloved mourners, if we could get you away, this morning, from thinking about yourselves to thinking about our Lord Jesus. If we could get you away from looking down upon your cares to thinking of Him what a change would come over you! If His hands could be laid upon you, those dear pierced hands which bought you, those mighty hands which rule Heaven and earth on your behalfthose blessed hands which are outstretched to plead for sinners, those dear hands which will press you to His bosom foreverif you could feel these by thinking of Him, then would you soon recover your early joy and renew the elasticity of your spirit and the bowing down of your soul would pass away like a night dream, to be forgotten forever!   
O Spirit of the Lord, make it so!   
IV. I will not linger there, but invite you, now, to notice THE LOOSING OF THE BOUND. We are told she was made straight at once! Now, what I want you to notice is thisshe must have lifted herself upthat was her own act and deed. No pressure or force was put upon hershe lifted herself up and yet she was made straight. She was passive, in so munch as a miracle was worked upon her, but she was active, too, and, being enabled, she lifted herself up. What a wonderful meeting there is here of the active and the passive in the salvation of men!   
The Arminian says to the sinner, Now, Sinner, you are a responsible being! You must do this and do that. The Calvinist says, Truly, Sinner, you are responsible enough, but you are also unable to do anything of yourself. God must work in you both to will and to do. What shall we do with these two teachers? They fell to fighting a hundred years ago most frightfully! We will not let them fight now, but what shall we do with them? We will let both speak and believe what is true in both their testimonies. Is it true what the Arminian says, that there must be an effort on the sinners part or he will never be saved? Unquestionably it is! As soon as the Lord gives spiritual life there is spiritual activity. Nobody is ever lugged into Heaven by his ears, or carried there asleep on a feather bed! God deals with us as with responsible, intelligent beings. That is true and what is the use of denying it?   
Now, what has the Calvinist to say? He says that the sinner is bound by the infirmity of sin and cannot lift himself up and when he does so, it is God that does it all and the Lord must have all the glory of it. Is not that true, too? Oh, says the Arminian, I never denied that the Lord is to have the glory! I will sing a hymn with you to the Divine honor and I will pray the same prayer with you for the Divine power. All Christians are thorough Calvinists when they come to singing and praying! But it is a pity to doubt as a doctrine what we profess on our knees and in our songs! It is most true that Jesus, alone, saves the sinner and equally true that the sinner believes unto salvation. The Holy Spirit never believed on behalf of anybodya man must believe for himself and repent for himself or be lost!   
But yet there was never a grain of true faith or true repentance in this world unless it was produced by the Holy Spirit. I am not going to explain these difficulties, because they are not difficulties, except in theory. They are plain facts of practical everyday life. The poor woman knew, at any rate, where to put the crown. She did not say, I straightened myself, no, but she glorified God and attributed all the work to His gracious power. The most remarkable fact is that she was made straight immediately, for there was something beyond her infirmity to be overcome. Suppose that any person had been diseased of the spine, or of the nerves and muscles for 18 yearseven if the disease which occasioned his being deformed could be entirely removed, what would be the effect? Why, the result of the disease would still remain, for the body would have become set through long continuance in one posture!   
You have doubtless heard of the fakirs and others in Indiaa man will hold his hand up for years in pursuance of a vow, but when the years of his penance are over, he cannot bring his hand downit has become fixed and immovable. In this case the bond which held the poor bowed body was taken away and, at the same time, the consequent rigidity was removed and she, in a moment stood up straight! This was a double display of miraculous power! O my poor tried Friend, if the Lord will visit you this morning He will not only take away the first and greatest cause of your sadness, but the very tendency to melancholy shall depart! The long grooves which you have worn shall be smoothed! The ruts in the road of sorrow which you have worn by long continuance in sadness shall be filled up and you shall be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might!   
The cure being thus perfect, the woman rose up to glorify God! I wish I had been there! I have been wishing so all the morning. I would have liked to have seen that hypocritical ruler of the synagogue when he made his angry speech! I would have liked to have seen him when the Master so thoroughly silenced him! But especially I would have rejoiced to have seen this poor woman standing upright and to have heard her praise the Lord! What did she say? It is not recorded, but we can well imagine. It was something like thisI have been 18 years in and out among you. You have seen me and know what a poor, miserable, wretched object I was! But God has lifted me up all in a moment. Blessed be His name, I have been made straight!   
What she spoke with her mouth was not half of what she expressed! No reporter could have taken it down! She spoke with her eyes, she spoke with her hands, she spoke with every limb of her body! I suppose she moved about to see if she was really straight and to make sure that it was not all a delusion. She must have been, all over, a living mass of pleasure and by every movement she praised God from the sole of her feet to the crown of her head! Never was there a more eloquent woman in the universe! She was like one new-born, delivered from a long death, joyous with all the novelty of a fresh life! Well might she glorify God! She made no mistake as to how the cure was workedshe traced it to a Divine powerand that Divine power she extolled. Brother, Sister, can you glorify Christ, this morning, that He has set you free? Though bound so long, you need not be bound any longer! Christ is able to deliver you! Trust Him, believe Him, be made straight and then go and tell your kinsfolk and acquaintances, You knew how depressed I was, for you cheered me in my sorrow as best you could, but now I have to tell you what the Lord has done for my soul.   
V. Fifthly, let us reflect upon OUR REASON FOR EXPECTING THE LORD JESUS TO DO THE SAME THING TODAY as He did 1,800 years and more, ago. What was His reason for setting this woman free? According to His own statement it was, first of all, human kindness. He says, When you have your ox, or your ass tied up and you see that it is thirsty, you untie the knot and lead the poor creature away down to the river, or the tank, to water. None of you would leave an ox tied up to famish. This is good reasoning and leads us to believe that Jesus will help sorrowing ones!   
Tried Soul, would you not loose an ox or an ass if you saw it suffering? Yes, you say. And do you think the Lord will not loose you? Have you more heart of mercy than the Christ of God? Come, come, think not so meanly of my Master! If your heart would lead you to pity an ass, do you think His heart will not lead Him to pity you? He has not forgotten you He still remembers you. His tender humanity moves Him to set you free! More than that, there was a special relationship. He tells this master of the synagogue that a man would loose his ox or his ass. Perhaps he might not think it his business to go and loose that which belonged to another man, but if it is his own ass, his own oxhe will loose him.   
And do you think, dear Heart, that the Lord Jesus will not loose you? He bought you with His blood! His Father gave you to Him! He has loved you with an everlasting lovewill He not loose you? You are His property! Do you not know that He sweeps His house to find His lost coin? He runs over hill and dale to find His lost sheep? And will He not come and loose His poor tied-up ox or ass? Will He not liberate His captive daughter? Assuredly He will! Are you a daughter of Abraham, a child of faith, and will He not set you free? Depend upon it, He will!   
Next, there was a point of antagonism which moved the Savior to act promptly. He says, This woman being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound. Now, if I knew the devil had tied anything up, I am sure I would try to unloose it, wouldnt you? We may be sure some mischief is brewing when the devil is working and, therefore, it must be a good deed to undo his work. But Jesus Christ came into the world on purpose to destroy the works of the devil! And so when He saw the woman like a tied-up ox, He said, I will unloose her if for nothing else than I may undo what the devil has done. Now, dear tried Friend, inasmuch as your sorrow may be traced to Satanic influence, Jesus Christ will prove, in your case, more than a match for the devil and He will set you free!   
Then think of her sorrowful condition. An ox or an ass tied up to the manger without water would soon be in a very sad plight. Pity it, poor thing. Hear the lowing of the ox, as hour after hour its thirst gnaws upon it. Would you not pity it? And do you think the Lord does not pity His poor, tried, tempted, afflicted children? Those tearsshall they fall for nothing? Those sleepless nightsshall they be disregarded? That broken heart which gladly would, but cannot believe the promise, shall that forever be denied a hearing? Has the Lord forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up the heart of His mercy? Ah, no! He will remember your sorrowful estate and hear your groans for He puts your tears into His bottle!

Last of all, there was this reason to move the heart of Christ, that she had been 18 years in that state. Then, said He, she shall be loosed at once. The master of the synagogue would have said, She has been bound 18 years and she may well wait till tomorrow, for it is only one day. No, says Christ, if she has been bound 18 years, she shall not wait a minute! She has had too much of it already. She shall be set free at once. Do not, therefore, argue from the length of your despondency that it shall not come to an end, but rather argue from it that release is near! The night has been so long, it must be so much nearer the dawn! You have been scourged so long that it must be so much nearer the last stroke, for the Lord does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. Therefore take heart and be of a good courage!  
Oh, that my Divine Master would now come and do what I gladly would do but cannot, namely, make every child of God here leap for joy! I know what this being bound by Satan means. The devil has not tied me up for 18 years at a stretch and I do not think he ever will, but he has brought me into sad bondage many a time. Still, my Master comes and sets me free and leads me out to waterand what a drink I get at such times! I seem as if I could drink up the Jordan at a draught when I get to His promises and quaff my fill of His sweet love!   
I know by this that He will lead other poor souls out to the water and when He does so to any of you, I pray you drink like an ox! You may be tied up againtherefore drink as much as you can of His Grace and rejoice while you may! Eat that which is good and let your soul delight in fatness. Be glad in the Lord, you righteous, and shout for joy all you that are upright in heart, for the Lord looses the prisoners. May He loose many now! Amen.

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Sermon #2891 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A SABBATH MIRACLE   
NO. 2891

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 7, 1904.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, JUNE 11, 1876.

**And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said unto her, Woman, you are loosed**

**from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.  
Luke 13:10-13.**

WHAT blessed days Sabbath days are! I mean not only the Jewish Sabbath on the seventh day of the week, but the Christian Sabbath on the first day of the week. I remember a friend in Newcastle telling me that when he was looking at a house in that city which was to be let, he was taken to the top of it and the agent said to him, You see that there is a fine view from here. You can see a long way today, but on Sundays you can see Durham Cathedral. My friend asked, Why on Sundays? And the reply was, You cannot see it the rest of the week because of the smoke, but, on Sundays it is usually clear enough to get a glimpse of it. What views some of us have had of Heaven and what views of Jesus Christ have been accorded to us on Sabbath days! We might have seen Him on other days if there had not been so much smoke from business, care and sin, but the blessed breath from Heaven has blown it all away on the Lords Day and we have been able to look even into that which is within the veil!

Our Lord Jesus Christ has performed wonders of Grace on all the days of the week. I would not be surprised to hear that there are Christians here who were converted on a Monday, or a Tuesday, or a Wednesday, or a Thursday, or a Friday, or a Saturday! But I should quite expect to learn that for every one of them, there are 10 here who were brought to Christ on the Sabbath! Heavens gates seem to be set more widely open on that day than during the rest of the week, or else we have more inclination to enter them then. When the full history of the Sabbath shall be unfolded, we shall begin to know what infinite mercy it was on Gods part to set aside one day in seven especially for His worship and for our spiritual benefit. Thousands upon thousands, yes, millions upon millions have found Jesus very near and rejoiced in Him on the Lords Day!

Our Savior was known to use the day for public worship and for the pursuance of His high and holy calling of blessing the children of men. So, finding that on that day He could meet with many in the synagogue, He was accustomed to go there and teach. Among the people who came on the particular Sabbath of which our text speaks, there was one poor woman who was possessed by an evil spirit. And that evil spirit had, I suppose, so affected her nerves and so influenced her entire system that her spinal cord was greatly weakened. Evidently she had suffered from the worst kind of curvature of the spine, for she was bent double, and could in no wise lift herself up. I am afraid that if any one of you had been in such a sad state as that, you would have said, I shall never go to the synagogue anymore, and that your friends would have said, We think you had better not go. You are such an object and you are so unwell, that you will be best at home. You can read a good book there and you can worship God just as acceptably in your own parlor as you can by going up to the public assembly of His people.

I am also afraid that there are some here who would have felt that they could be excused for a much lighter affliction than that poor woman suffered from, for I have known some who could not come out to the service if it happened to be wetthough they went to business on wet days. Many people imagine that Sunday is a convenient day for being ill and getting a little rest so as to be fortified for the more important business which requires all their energies Monday and during the rest of the week. It seems as though they thought that cheating God out of His day is a very small matter, but that robbing themselves of even a portion of a day would greatly grieve them.

If this poor woman had not gone to the synagogue, I do not know that she would ever have met with Christ. So I commend her example to you even if your bodily infirmities increase so much that you might make very justifiable excuses for being absent. There was a dear Sister, now in Heaven, who attended this Tabernacle for years though she was so deaf that she never heard a word that was spoken. The reasons she gave for being here were that, at any rate, she could join in the hymns and that had she stayed away, she would have felt as if she was dissociated from the people of God and other people, perhaps, might not have known the reason for her absenceand it might, therefore, have been a bad example to them. So she said, Though I do not hear a word, I love to be there, and she has told me that some of the happiest hours she has ever spent have been those when she has thus had communion with the people of God, although she could not fully understand all that was being said or done. In like manner, dear Friends, as often as the people of God assemble for worship, join with them!

Notice one thing more about this woman. She did not get any good through going to the synagogue, as long as she merely went there. She went to the synagogue bent double and she came back bent double. If she went all those 18 years, as I daresay she did, she was unable to lift herself up all that long time! Do not, I pray youyou who are regular attendants at the House of God and yet remain unsavedget into the notion that all you need is to attend Divine Service so many times on the Sabbath or on weeknights, for, if you do, you will not likely ever get a blessing. This poor woman was not healed until she met with the Lord Jesus Christ! And I wish each one of you would come here saying, Oh, that I might meet with Jesus today! Oh, that Jesus would meet with me! It is a rule, with very few exceptions, that what a man fishes for he is most likely to catch. If any come here merely out of idle curiosity, it is possible, though not certain, that their curiosity will be satisfied. If any come to find fault, I have no doubt that they will find plenty to complain of. But if any of you have come determined to find Christ if He is to be found, it will be a very surprising thing if you have to go away without discovering Him! This is what you really need if you are to be restored from all the ills that sin has workedyou must come to Christ Himself.

I. Coming to the story of this poor woman who was bent double, the first thing to be noted is that CHRISTS COMPASSION WAS EXCITED. Jesus, while He was teaching in the synagogue, looked into the faces of His congregation and as He looked at them, He saw this woman and His heart was at once moved with compassion towards her.

Note that it was not her prayers that moved Him, or any plea she urged, for she did not speak to Him, or plead with Him. This was one of the cases in which no request for healing was presented to the Savior. It was the sight of her misery that touched His heart. Perhaps, dear Friends, if she had not been bent double, Christs notice might not have been so quickly drawn to her. But because she was what people call, quite an object, and looked so sad, she attracted Christs attention.

Notice, also, that Christ was not moved to compassion by the prayers of anybody else for her. Sometimes He healed the sick when their fathers, or mothers, or friends brought them to Him. But nobody brought this poor woman to Jesus. It does not seem as if anybody had sufficient compassion upon her to ask Jesus to heal her, or, if they had the compassion, they had not enough faith to believe that it was possible for her to be healed. There she was, a poor lone woman and, possibly, it was the sight of her with not a friend to help her, that touched Christs heart and moved Him to fix His gaze upon her with a view to curing her sad complaint.

Notice, further, that Christs heart was not touched by any description which she gave Him of her condition. She gave Him no description and none was needed. He looked at herthat was all that was required, for He already knew all about her. She did not say, I have been bound by Satan for 18 years, but Christ knew that she had been. As He looked at her, He read her life story as a man reads a book. And as He read the story, His heart was moved with compassion towards her. I wonder whether there is a soul here that has not been asking the Lord for a blessing because that soul does not think it is likely that any blessing would come? I wonder whether there is anyone here who has not dared to hope and, therefore, has not dared to pray? My Master has a wonderful eye for such souls as these! There may have been in that synagogue a man wearing a gold ring, or a lady in a fine dress, but Christ did not notice them or their adornment. He picked out the person who was the most miserable, the most wretched and who most needed His pityand upon her He fixed those blessed eyes of His with a compassion tender as the heart of a woman! And His whole soul was moved with pity for her because she was so grievously bound by the accursed power of Satan.

Now let us look at this womans case a little more closely. She was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up. That, in itself, was a painful thingall the beauty of the womans form and figure had gone. And being bent double like that must have produced most serious injury to every organ of the poor creatures body. I have no doubt that she was the subject of a thousand aches and pains through the posture in which she had been bent. Besides, it is a beautiful thing to be able to look up but to be always obliged to look down is something terrible! Through this trying affliction, the poor woman could not even see the Savior though, happily, He could see her, bent down as she was in the crowd. Instead of looking up with the face of a woman, she had to carry her head down towards the earth like a poor beastand I would not wonder if the spirit of evil that was in her had made her feel unhappy, sorrowful and almost despairing. I am also inclined to think that her mind may have been, like her body, bent towards the earth and that this, too, was caused by Satanic influence.

Perhaps the worst point about her case was that she had been for 18 years in that sad condition. We do not know how it came about. She may, as a girl, have been able to run in the fields and spend her days right merrily but, all of a sudden, perhaps, there came upon her this evil spirit and she began to feel weakness of the spine and, by-and-by, she was bent double, the sun of her life was put out and her days were dark with sorrow and painand this had continued for 18 years! What a long time that is to be such a sufferer! Eighteen years of happiness may pass very quickly, but 18 years of pain is a very long period. This woman, for 18 years, could not lift up her head to look at the sun. For 18 years Satan had possessed her, bowed her body together and filled her mind with morbid thoughts, dreary dreams and terrible forebodings of dreadful things to happen in the future! Jesus knew all about those 18 years, so we do not wonder that He had compassion upon her.

Possibly in this congregationno, I am quite sure I have some who, in soul, are like this poor woman was in body. You feel that you would gladly give all you have to be saved, but you have long ago given up all hope of that. You did, at one time, hear the Gospel with some degree of pleasure, but now, even while you listen to it, you keep on condemning yourself and saying, Salvation will never come to me. You have fallen into a condition of chronic melancholy and you are so sad that friends who used to cheer you, gave you up in despair long ago. Perhaps they call you foolish, but God knows that it is not folly, but a most grievous calamity that has happened to you. You cannot see Jesus and you do not think that He can see youbut He does and that is your only ray of hope! If I were to attempt to comfort you, I know that I would fail. If you are the person of whom I am thinking, no language from merely human lips will ever comfort youthere will have to be a Divine Voice reaching your inmost soul or else you will never be loosed from your infirmity! We meet with some such persons every now and then and we try to cheer them. It is right that we should do so. We pity them and we are quite sure that our Lord Jesus Christ pities them still more, for there is not one of us whose heart is one half as tender towards his fellow man as the heart of Christ, Himself, is and must be. So, you poor afflicted ones tossed with tempest and not comfortedyou downtrodden, sin-burdened souls Jesus picks you out of this throng, as He picked out that poor woman in the synagogue, that He may have mercy upon you as He had upon her!

II. Secondly, JESUS ISSUED A COMMANDHe called her to Him. Somehow or other He managed to attract her attention and then, probably not without considerable difficulty and pain, she made a great effort and, at last, was able to see Him. And He said something to this effect, Will that poor woman over yonder who is bent double, come here to Me? Whatever words He may have used, we know that He called her to Him. Was not that command a proof of great Grace and condescension on Christs part? If He, the Messiah, who spoke as never man spoke, had called the ruler of the synagogue and spoken familiarly to him, one might not have wondered so much. Yet, out of all that throng He did not call anyone except that poor decrepit, bowed-down, Satan-possessed daughter of Abraham! And we are expressly told that, He called her to Him. He might have called to her from a distance and said, Be healed, but He did not, for He wished to show His special sympathy with such a sad case of suffering.   
This call was not only given in great condescension, but it was also given directly and personally to herHe called her to Him. If Jesus had said, I wish any person here who suffers from a spirit of infirmity to come to Me, perhaps she might have come, perhaps she might not. But, instead of giving a general intimation like that, He fixed His eyes on her, and called her to Him. Do any of you remember a sermonI do very wellin which the preacher seemed to speak to nobody but yourself? I am fully persuaded that if I had been like the prisoners in some of our jailsshut up in a box where I could not see anybody but the preacher on the occasion when the Lord met with me, the preacher could not have addressed himself more pointedly to me than he then did! And on the occasion to which our text refers, Christ addressed Himself to this woman personally and pointedly. I am hoping that the description I have given of the woman will make someone here say, Ah, that is just my case! Well, if so, O poor bowed-down daughter, poor languishing, desponding man, Jesus calls you! If that description applies to you, take the personal call to yourself and say, This condescending, pointed call is addressed to me.   
Then do as this poor woman didmake it a call which was promptly obeyed. I daresay that the other people in the synagogue were very surprised that Christ called her, yet they made way for her and, strange object as she wasperhaps, every step painful to hershe managed to get where Christ was. As she was coming towards Him, she heard Him make this extraordinary statement, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And when she got close to Him, He laid both His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight. How startled she must have been even at Christs first calland little did she dream that He was going to cure her in such a fashion! And perhaps there is someone here whom Christ means to save, yet you have not even been thinking of Him. Nevertheless, thus is it written in the counsels of eternity, In the Tabernacle, on that summer Sunday night, such-and-such a soul must be delivered from the bondage of Satan. If it is so written, all the devils in Hell cannot hold you captive beyond the appointed moment! And all the weight of your sins and the evil habits that you have formed and so long practiced shall burn like so much straw in a blazing fire, for Gods eternal decree of Mercy must be fulfilled! And He who comes to deliver you is none other than Christ, the Son of God, mighty to save, before whom gates of brass are broken and bars of iron are snapped in sunder!   
It was a glorious Sabbath for that poor woman when the Lord came forth, determined to heal her! And this will be a glorious Sabbath for you if the Lord now resolves to save you! He is even now calling you doubters, you desponding ones, you who have given up all hope! He is calling you, will you not come to Him? Will you not trust Him? He asks you to believe, not that you are good, but that He is goodnot that you can be healed by your neighbor, but that you can be healed by your Savior! He asks you to come and listen to His gracious words while He says, Your sins are forgiven you; go in peace. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.   
III. We have so far noticed two thingsChrists compassion excited and His command issued. Next, CHRISTS POWER WAS MANIFESTED and that was done in a very instructive way.   
Jesus said to her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. It is the Word of the Lord that has power in it. Whenever people are converted and brought to Christ, it is by Gods Word that the deed is done. Fine sermons never win soulsyou may blaze away, young man, at a terrific rate with your brilliant oratory and your fine pieces of poetry and quotations from eminent authors! And your sermon ending may be like the set piece at a display of fireworks, or the final burst of brightness with which it all endsbut all that will not save souls! What does save souls, then? Why, the Word of the Lord, the Truth of God as it is in Jesus! I have noticed that the very words of Scripture are usually those that reach the heart, so, Brothers and Sisters, if you really want to find the Lord, give good heed to His Word! Incline your ears and come to Himhear, and your soul shall live, for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of the Lord.

In addition to speaking to the woman, Christ laid His hands on her and that is the way that healing reaches sin-sick souls, by being brought into contact with Christ! When the pure Humanity of Christ is recognized by us and we perceive that He is our Brother and our Friendwhen we see that He bears both our sins and our sorrows and carries our sicknesses in His own blessed Personwhen we realize that Christ has become our Representative and Suretya sense of peace comes to our soul! One reason why Jesus is so well qualified to save us is that   
*He knows what sore temptations mean,   
For He has felt the same*   
and He is, therefore, able to aid those who are tempted. Bowed-down woman, He puts His pierced hands upon you! Sorely troubled man, know you not that God has taken your nature upon Himself and now says to you, Be you comforted, for I have loved you and lived for you and died for you? God grant that you may feel that healing touch and experience that Divine Deliverance this very hour!   
That afflicted woman was healed immediately. One of the most wonderful things about Christs cures was that, as a general rule, they were worked in an instant. Can you imagineI have often tried to do sothe strange sensations that passed through some of those people when they were healed in a moment? Think of this poor woman18 years bent double and then completely restored in a single instant! What a paradise must have been condensed into those few minutes! At first I suppose she may have thought that she was only dreaming. What? Was she able to stand upright and to look into the face of Him who had worked such a wonderful cure for her? The rapture must have seemed almost too much for her when she realized that she was healed in an instant! And what if, just now, you should be saved in an instant? Remember that to pardon sin does not take God a single secondto save a soul from death and Hell is a more rapid work than for the lightning bolt to fall from Heaven! At one moment a great load of sin may be upon you and you may be fully conscious of the terrible burdenthe next instant every sin is gone and you are conscious that it is soand ready to leap for joy! Nobody can work this mighty miracle of mercy but the Lord Jesus Christ, yet He can do it more swiftly than I can speak of it. Oh, that some who have been bound by Satan for 18 years, or even longer, may prove that they do not need 18 minutes, or even 18 seconds to get freebut may they now look to Jesus and, believing in Him, find instantaneous healing!   
Once more, this womans cure was perfect as well as instantaneous. She did not lift herself up a little and find that the Satanic bondage was being somewhat relaxed. No, she was perfectly healed and, better still, she was permanently healed! Her malady did not come back. We have known doctors set a man up for a little time and, after that, there has been a relapse. But this woman was both made straight and kept straightand if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the salvation which He gives us, though it is instantaneous, is also perfect and everlasting, for whoever trusts in Christ is saved immediately and saved forever! The gifts and calling of God are not matters for repentance on His partHe does not give salvation and then take it back, but, having once given it, it remains the property of its possessor world without end! Then what a precious Christ He is and what a glorious Healer! I hope some sick one here is saying, I wish He would look this way, oh, that Jesus would look on me! He is looking upon you, Soul! Hear what He says to you, Come unto Me. Trust in Me. If you trust Jesus now, though you have been bent double these eighteen, these twenty-eight, these thirty-eight, these forty-eight, these fifty-eight, these sixty-eightthese 98 years, or these 118 years, if such a person could be, if you did but look to Him, come to Him, trust Himin a moment He would make you whole! Oh, that you may do so!   
IV. The last thing of all is thisCHRISTS POWER WAS GLORIFIED.   
It is said of this woman that, immediately, being made straight, she glorified God. I should think she did! I should not mind having interruptions in our service from people who had found Christ. Our Methodist friends in the olden times, when they found peace, used to shout, Hallelujah! Well, if they really had found Christ, I think they were warranted in shouting. If ever a man might cry, Eureka! Eureka! it was not the old philosopher, but the new-born child of God! Oh, what bliss it is to find the Savior! If one were, for a little while, delirious with the excessive joy of being saved by Grace, it might be excusable. It is said that some of our young converts are wonderfully enthusiastic. Yes, and well they may be! If you had received such a blessing as they have, you would be enthusiastic, too! If you have ever known the weight of sin crushing you to the dust and then have had it suddenly borne away, you must have felt a mighty rebound when that great load had been removed. Could that healed woman help clapping her hands? Did she not stand up before the whole congregation in the synagogue and say, That Man must be the Son of God, blessed be His holy name! After 18 years of bondage, He has healed me in a moment!   
Or suppose that she was of the very quiet sortlike the most of you good Sistersif she did not say a word, yet I think she glorified God by simply standing up straight. If she did not say anything, but just walked away home, all who had known her in her long time of affliction, when they saw her stand up, a fine tall handsome womanand knew that she must be the same personmust have been struck with wonder and have said, What new power is this? Who but God could thus have restored this woman? I would like, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that you and I would so live that our very lives would preach for Jesus Christthat people would only have to listen to our ordinary conversation, or to see the cheerfulness of our countenance, or to perceive the hopefulness of our spirit under trouble, our justness and integrity, our readiness to forgive, our zeal for God! It is good to preach with your tongue if God has called you to do so. But never forget that the best preaching in the world is done by other members of the body. So, preach with your feetby your walk and conversation! Let your whole being be a living, powerful, irresistible illustration of the power of Jesus Christ to bless and save!   
It was so in the case of this woman, for I do not think that after she had clapped her hands once and stood up to testify before the whole congregation, that she was finished glorifying God. Oh, no! All her life she would be glad to tell that story over and over again! I wonder whether she got married after that wonderful healing? It is very likely that she did. And if so, and she had children of her own, as they sat on her knee one of the first stories she would tell them would be about when she was bent double for 18 years and then that wonderful Prophet called her to Him in the synagogue, one Sabbath, and made her straight in a moment! Perhaps she lived long enough to tell the story of Christs suffering and death. If she ever saw any of her grandchildren, I am sure they would say, Come, Granny, tell us your story, and she would tell it so well that they would want to hear it again and again!   
I think that every Christian should go home to his friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for them. There is a Brother not far from me at this momentwho had been a wild young man, fond of all the sports of the country. He went to London and heard a sermon that was the means of his conversion. When he went home, one of his friends with whom he used to follow the hounds, said to him, Well, Tom, what is the best thing you heard in London? And Tom replied, The best thing I heard in London is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Oh, said his companion, you have gone mad! No, answered Tom, I was mad before I went to London, but I have been cured. I hope you will be able to give such testimony as that concerning what Jesus Christ has done for your souls, even as this poor woman was made straight, and glorified God.   
Some people may say to you, You had better hold your tongue, for you will break down if you try to tell such a story as that. That would be the very best thing you could do! There is nothing like a break-down when you are telling your story of redeeming Grace and dying loveit is the very glory of it when you break down with emotion and cannot say any morefor your hearers will be all the more anxious to know the rest of it! And there will be a deeper impression produced by your breaking down than there would have been if you had kept right on. But, anyway, do tell the story! Tell it as long as you have any breath in your body! Tell how Jesus has done all things well and saved your soul. Make Heaven and earth to ring with the glad news! And when you go Home to Glory, tell the angels all about it, for they will be glad to hear your story and they will break out into fresh praise as they listen to it! May God thus bless every one of you, for Jesus Christs sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 9.**

This Psalm has a dedication which is very difficult to understandTo the chief Musician upon Muth-labben. A Psalm of David. Either Muthlabben is the tune to which the Psalm was to be sung, or some musical instrument that is now forgotten, or else it alludes to Ben, who was one of the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chronicles 15:18. In all probability, however, the true translation of the title is, A Psalm on the death of the son, or, on the death of the champion, and it is thought by some that it was composed by David after the death of giant Goliath. If it is so, I think you will see, as we read the Psalm, that it well proclaims the victory which God had worked.

Verse 1. I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all Your marvelous works. It will be well if we also resolve that we will praise the Lord. Most people have something or someone to praise, so let us select the Lord, even Jehovah, as the Subject of our song. Let us resolve that we will praise Him continually, for it may be difficult, sometimes, to do it. The heart may be very heavyit may even be inclined to rebellion and murmuringbut let us make this strong resolution in the power of Gods GraceI will show forth all Your marvelous works. Here is room for great variety of praise and here are abundant topics for praise, for there is no work of God which is not marvelous and worthy of being praised with our whole heart! So, Lord, I will not be dumb. You have given me a tongueI am not like the brute beasts that cannot speakmy tongue is the glory of my frame, so with it I will show forth all Your marvelous works.

2. I will be glad and rejoice in You: I will sing praise to Your name, O You most High. Get up, then, my Soul, out of the dark places of your despondency! Rise, my drooping spirit, to something higher and better. If you cannot be glad in anything else, be glad in your Godbe glad that you have a God and such a Godand that He is still your God. Whatever else you may have lost, you have not lost Him. I will be glad and rejoice. The reduplication of the words indicates a double joya double gladness! As the Apostle says, Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Be glad twice over, for you have double cause for rejoicing in the Lord.

3. When my enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at Your Presence. As much as to say, The Presence of God is quite enough to make my adversaries fleeyes, and to utterly cut them off. As John Wesley said, The best of all is God is with us. And if God is with us, it matters little to us who are against us!

4. For You have maintained my right and my cause; You sat in the throne judging right. One of our noblemen has this for his motto, I will maintain it. But the Christian has a far better oneYou have maintained my right. If David sang thus after he had hurled the stone from his sling into Goliaths skull, he might well magnify the name of the Lord who had maintained the rights of His people and put the uncircumcised champion of the Philistines to confusion and death!

5, 6. You have rebuked the heathen, You have destroyed the wicked, You have put out their name forever and ever. O you enemy. You can conceive of David, standing on the prostrate form of his fallen foe, and looking on that gigantic countenance and those mighty limbs, crying out, O you enemy

6, 7. Destructions are finished forever! And you have destroyed cities, their memory is perished with them. But the Lord shall endure forever: He has prepared His Throne for judgment. You have destroyed cities, but you could not destroy God. When you did defy the armies of other nations, you could easily put them to rout, but when you did defy the living Godthen there was the end of you, for you could not overcome Him, nor overcome His people. Blessed be God for thisour faith is founded upon a rock that never shall be removedand our confidence is fixed upon One who can never fail us and whose Truth must stand fast forever!

8-10. And He shall judge the world in righteousness, He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know Your name will put their trust in You. The basis of faith is knowledge and there is no knowledge like that which comes from experience. If you know the name of God as Jehovahthe Self-Existent and Ever-Living Godyou will have good reason for trusting Him. And then, if you know His many precious namessuch as Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord Our Righteousness, Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord My Banner, Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord Will Provide, Jehovah-Shalom, the Peace-Giving God and Jehovah-Shammah, the God Who Is There Where His People Areyes, if any one name of God is fully understood by you, you will put your trust in Him!

10-12. For You, LORD, have not forsaken them that seek You. Sing praises to the LORD who dwells in Zion: declare among the people His doings. When He makes inquisition for blood, He remembers them. When the great Coroners Inquest shall be held upon all who have wrongly suffered, the commission will open by an enquiry concerning the blood of the martyrsWhen He makes inquisition for blood, He remembers them. His suffering ones, who laid down their lives for the Truth of Gods sake, shall find that their blood was precious in His sight.

12. He forgets not the cry of the humble. Is there no consolation in these words for some of you? You have been humbled and brought down from your high place. Now, then, is your time to cryand when you do so, you will prove that He forgets not the cry of the humble. There are many who give heed to the petitions of their needy fellow creatures and feel their force for a timebut they are engaged in business, or occupied in other waysand they soon forget. Other things crowd out the needy ones petition and so he is left without help. But it is never so with God He forgets not the cry of the humble. Notice in the next verse how David avails himself of that Truth. He seems to say, Is it true that God does not forget the cry of the humble? Then I will cry to Him and my humble cry shall go up to His ear and to His heart.

13. Have mercy upon me, O Lord. What a blessed prayer that isa prayer useful on all occasionsunder a sense of sin, or under a load of sorrowburdened with labor, or crushed with despondency. It is a prayer which is like the cherubims sword which turned every wayyou may use it as you will. Have mercy upon me, O Lord.

13. Consider my trouble which I suffer by them that hate me, You that lifted me up from the gates of death. What a lift that islifted up from the gates of death into life and ultimately into Heaven! What an Almighty God our Lord proves Himself to be at a dead lift! When every other arm is paralyzed, He comes to us and lifts us up from the gates of death.

14. That I may show forth all Your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion. From the gates of death to the gates of Zion is the lift which God gives to His poor suffering people!

14, 15. I will rejoice in Your salvation. The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made. If you picture David with the carcass of the giant before him, the Philistines put to ignominious flight and the Israelites in full pursuit after them, you can understand His saying, The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made.

15, 16. In the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The LORD is known by the judgment which He executes: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Meditation. Selah. The probable meaning of these words is, Consider and pause. They are musical rests, perhaps, but they also suggest to us how well it is, in our reading of the Scriptures, sometimes to stop a while and inwardly digest the Words that we have read.

17. The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God. Even if they are not outwardly as wicked as other men are, yet their forgetfulness of God is the highest form of injustice to Him! It is treason against the Majesty of Heaven! It is robbing God of what is His right! It is a combination of everything that is evil!

18-20. For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever. Arise, O LORD, let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in Your sight. Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men. They boast that they are men and that they quit themselves like men. Yet let them know that although they are men, they are only menwith all the infirmities and imperfections of menand that there is a God who will, in due time, let men know that they are but men and that the best of men are but men at the best!

20. Selah. Pause again, think over what we have been reading and lift up your heart in prayer to God, seeking the aid of the Holy Spirit to apply His Truth to your soul.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK9, 146.   
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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3195 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

CHRIST LOOSENS FROM INFIRMITIES   
NO. 3195

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 1910.   
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***And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over, and could in no wise lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said unto her, Woman, you are***

***loosened from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. Luke 13:11-13.***

[See Sermons #1426, Volume 24THE LIFTING UP OF THE BOWED DOWN and #2891, Volume 50 A SABBATH MIRACLEfor sermons on the same miracleRead/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

OUR text commences with a beholdbehold, there was a woman. And as it was often remarked by the Puritan writers, whenever we see the word, behold, in Scripture, we are to regard it as a nota bene, as a mark in the margin calling our particular attention to what follows. Where Christ worked wonders, we should have attentive eyes and ears. When Jesus is dispensing blessings, whether to ourselves or to others, we should never be in a state of indifference!

I shall use this miracle as a type, as it were, for doubtless the miracles of Christ were so intended. Our Lord was declared to be a Prophet mighty in deed and word. He was to be a Prophet like unto Moses and He is the only one who was like unto Moses in these two respects. Many Prophets followed Moses who were mighty in wordsuch as Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah, but then they were not mighty in deed. Many, on the other hand, were mighty in deedlike Elijah and Elisha, but they were not mighty in word. Our Lord was mighty in both respects and a Prophet in both respectsa Prophet mighty in deed and word. I take it, therefore, that His miraculous deeds are parts of His prophecies. They are the illustrations of His great life-sermon. The words which fell from His lips are as the text and the letter of the Book, but the miracles are the pictures from which our childlike minds may often learn more than from the words, themselves. We shall so use the picture before us now may the Holy Spirit give us instruction!

I. In the first place, THIS WOMAN, BOWED DOWN WITH A SPIRIT OF INFIRMITY, TYPIFIES TO US THE CASE OF VERY MANYvery many whom we have seen and some of whom are listening to these words. Oh, that the same miracle might be worked in them as in her! She typifies persons who are depressed in spirit, who cannot look up to Heaven and rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, persons who have a hope, a good hope, too, but not a strong onea hope which enables them to hold on as the men did in Pauls shipwreck when, on boards and broken pieces of the ship they came safe to land, but not a hope which gives them an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. They are saved, like this woman, who was a true daughter of Abraham, notwithstanding all her infirmities. She was truly of the promised seed, notwithstanding that she could not lift herself up, so these are genuine Christians, truly saved, and yet constantly subject to infirmity.

In some, it takes this shape. They believe in Christ and rest on the precious blood, yet they are sometimes afraid that they have sinned the unpardonable sin. Though their better and more reasonable selves will do battle against the delusion, still they hug it to their hearts. Seeing that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a sin which is unto deathand that when a man has committed it, his spirit diesand repentance, the desire to be saved and all good emotions cease to be when that dreadful spiritual death is ours, I say that they can thus reason with themselves in their better moments and see that their fear is a delusion, but they soon fall back again into that dreadful slough. They see no signs of Grace, but they think they see signs of reprobation.

Many have I met withI may say that I meet with such people every weekwho are afraid that they are hypocrites. When I encounter persons troubled with this fear, I cannot help smiling at them, for if they really were hypocrites, they would not be afraid of it and their fear of presumption argues very strongly that they are not living in it!

Then this infirmity will take another shape. If you drive them from the other errors, they say they are afraid that they are self-deluded. This is a very proper fear when it leads to self-examination and comes to an end. But it becomes a very improper fear when it perpetually destroys our joy, prevents our saying, Abba, Father, with an unfaltering tongue and keeps us at a distance from the precious Savior who would have us come very near to Him and be most familiar with His brotherly heart.

Supposing this difficulty should be met, still there are tens of thousands who are very much in doubt concerning their election. What if they should not be elect, they say? This, of course results from ignorance, for if they read the Word, they would soon discover that all those who believe in Christ may be certain of their electionfaith being the public mark of Gods privately chosen people! If you make your calling sure, you have made your election sure! If you know yourself now to be a lover of God, resting upon the great Propitiation which He has set forth for sin, then you may know that this is a work of Grace in your soul! God never worked a work of Grace where He had not make an election of Grace. That fear, therefore, may be easily driven away and yet thousands are in bondage to it!

Others are afflicted with the daily fear that they shall not persevere. They say, After all our professions and prayers, we fear we shall yet be castaways. The Apostle Paul was not afflicted with this fear. He strove lest this fear should ever come near him. He so lived with holy diligence, that he might always be in a state of blessed assurance, lest, after having preached to others, he, himself, should be a castaway. But he could say, I know that my Redeemer lives, even as Job could. And he could also say, I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. Still, tens of thousands are perpetually subject to that form of bondage! They cannot reach, in fact, the full assurance of faith. They have scarcely even the glimmering of Assurance. They trustthey trust as the publican did, standing afar off, but they have never yet come with John to lean their heads upon the bosom of the Savior! They are His disciples and His servants, but they can scarcely understand how He can call them His friends and permit them to enjoy close communion with Himself.

Now, Beloved, this woman thus bowed down was very like these persons for the following reasons   
Her infirmity much marred her beauty. The beauty and dignity of the human form is to walk erect, to look the sun in the face and gaze upon the heavens. This woman could do nothing of the kind. She was, no doubt, very conscious of this and shrank from the public gaze. So unbelief, distrust, mistrust, suspicionthese direful infirmities to which some are subject, spoil their spiritual beauty. They have the Divine Grace of humility. In this respect, they very often excel others, but the other graces, the noble graces of faith and holy confidence and couragethese they cannot display. The beauty of their character is marred.   
Moreover, this woman had her enjoyment spoiled. It must have been a sad thing for her to go about the world bent double. She could not gaze on the beauties of Nature as others could and all her motions must have been, if not painful, yet certainly exceedingly inconvenient. Such is the case with the doubting, distrustful soul under infirmity. He can do but little. Prayer is a painful groaning out of his soul. When he sings, it is usually in a deep bass. His harp hangs upon the willows. He feels that he is in Babylon and cannot sing the songs of Zion.   
This woman, too, must have been very unfit for active service. Little of household duty could she perform, and that with pain. And as to public acts of mercy, she could take but small part in them, being subject to this constant infirmity. And so is it with you who are Much-Afraids or, Fearings, you who have troubled spirits. You cannot lead the van in the day of battle. You can scarcely tell others of the Saviors preciousness. You cannot expect to be great reapers in the Masters harvest. You have to stay by the stuff while others go forth to fight. There is a special law which David made of old concerning those who tarried there, so you do get a blessing, but you miss the higher blessing of noble activity and Christian service.   
I might thus enlarge and show the likeness more clearly, but I think you can draw the picture for yourselves. You see the woman come into the synagogue and your pity is at once excited. But if you love the souls of men and God has made you to be tender as a nursing mother to others, you will pity, yet more, many of the true seed of Abraham who are bowed down with infirmity.   
It appears, from our Saviors words, that this womans infirmity was coupled with Satanic influence. Whom Satan has bound, He said, lo, these eighteen years. We do not know how much Satan has to do with us. I do know that we often lay a great deal on his back which he does not deserveand that we do a thousand evil things ourselves and then ascribe them to him. Still, there are gracious souls who do walk in the paths of holiness, who do hate sin, who, for all that, sometimes cannot enjoy peace. We cannot blame them. We must believe that the Satanic spirit is at work, marring their joy and spoiling their comfort. Dr. Watts says   
*He worries whom he cannot devour   
With a malicious joy*   
and doubtless that is true. He knows he cannot destroy you because you are in Christ and, therefore, if the dog cannot bite, he will at least bark. Like Mercy, in Bunyans Pilgrims Progress, you will often be alarmed by the evil ones and all the more so because these evil ones know that in a little while you will be out of gunshot of all the powers of Hell, and beyond the hearing of all the bellowing of the fiends of the Pit! Satan had much to do with this poor womans infirmity.   
It appears, very clearly, too, from reading the passage, that the womans weakness was beyond all human art. She could in no wise lift herself up, which implies, I think, that she had tried all ways within her reach and knowledge. She could in no wise. Neither by those mechanical operations which have sometimes been found effective in such diseases, nor by those medicines which were much vaunted in that age, could she receive the slightest relief. She had done her best and physicians had done their worstand yet notwithstanding all, she could by no means lift herself upand, truly, there are many in this condition spiritually. Have you ever been, as a Christian pastor, utterly baffled in dealing with some cases of spiritual distress? Have you ever been driven to pray, feeling the blessedness of prayer all the more because you have proved the futility of your own efforts to comfort a sin-distressed, Satantossed spirit? Often has that been my case. There has been the promise to meet the case, but the poor soul could not lay hold of it! There has been the cheering Word of God which has been efficient enough at other times, but it seemed to be a dead letter to this poor spirit in bondage. There has been the case, in point, and the experience of somebody else just like the case in hand, which we tried to tell with sympathy. We tried to work ourselves, as it were, into the position of the sufferer with whom we were dealing. But still, for all that, we seemed to be speaking to the winds and trying to comfort one who was so conditioned to sorrow that he felt that for him to cast off the somber weeds would be a sin, and to cease to mourn would be presumption. Many a time has such a case come before us and we have thought of this womanand could only pray that the Master would put His hand upon the person, for our hand and our voice were utterly powerless!   
Poor soul, she had been a long time in this case! Eighteen years! Eighteen years! Well, that is not very long if you are in health, strength and prosperity. How the years trip along as with wings on their heels! They are scarcely here before they are fled! But 18 years of infirmity, pain and constantly-increasing weakness! Eighteen years she dragged her chain until the iron entered into her soul. Eighteen years! Two long apprenticeships to sorrow till she had become the acquaintance of grief. Yes, and some such persons, though prisoners of hope, are kept in bondage as long as that. Their disease is like an intermittent fever which comes on, sometimes, and then is relieved. They have times when they are at their worstthe ebb tideand then they have their floods again. Now and then they have a glimpse of summer, but soon the cold chilly winter comes on them again. Sometimes they half think they have escaped and leap like the emancipated slave when his fetters are broken, but they very soon have to go back again to the jails and the manacles, having no permanent relief, still being prisoners year after year. I know I am describing a case which is known to some of you. Perhaps I am photographing you!

Yet for all this, this woman was a daughter of Abraham. The Lord Jesus knew her pedigree and assured the ruler of the synagogue of it. She was one of the true seed of Israel notwithstanding all her failings. Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, to be loosened even on the Sabbath? demanded the Master. Yes, and you, poor anxious spirit, though your faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, yet, if you have a simple faith in Christ, you are safe! You, troubled and tossed one, though your boat seems ready to be swallowed up by the waves, if you have taken Jesus into the vessel, you shall come safely to the land! Poor Heart, you may be brought very low, but you shall never be brought low enough to perish, for underneath there are the everlasting arms. Like Jonah, you may go to the bottoms of the mountains and think that the earth with her bars is about you forever, but you shall yet be brought up and you shall sing Jonahs song, Salvation is of the Lord! God does not cast off His people because of their dark frames and feelings. He does not love them because of their high enjoymentsneither will He reject them because of their deep depressions. Christian is dear. Father Honest is dear. Valiant-for-Truth, too, is dear to the King of the pilgrims! And Ready-toHalt, upon his crutches, is equally dear, and Mr. Fearing and Miss Much-Afraid, though they may lie in Doubting Castle till they are almost starved, shall surely be brought out, for they are true pilgrims and shall at length safely reach the Celestial City!   
II. But we must pass on to our second point, namely that THE EXAMPLE OF THIS WOMAN IS INSTRUCTIVE TO ALL IN HER CASE.   
Observe that she did not tamely yield to her infirmity without effort. The expression, She could in no wise lift herself upan old Saxon form of saying, She could in no ways lift herself upshows, as I have said before, that she had tried her best. I believe some of you might stand upright if you liked. I am quite certain that in some cases, people get into the way of surrendering to depression until at last they become powerless against it. Some stimulant is given them in the form of a sick husband, or a dying child and they grow quite cheerful. Under some real trouble, they become patient, but when this real trouble is taken away, they begin manufacturing troubles of their own. They are never happy, I might almost say, except when they are miserableand never cheerful except when they have something to cast them down! If they have a real trouble, they get strength to bear it, but at other times, they are morbidly troubled in spirit. Now, let us imitate this woman and shake off our doubts and our unbelief as much as possible. Let us strike up the hymn   
*Begone, unbelief, my Savior is near!   
And for my relief will surely appear.   
By prayer let me wrestle, and He will perform, With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm!* Let us say, with David, Why are you cast down, O my Soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him. Do not so soon yield to the shafts of unbelief. Hold up the shield of faith and say to your soul, No, as the Lord lives, who is the Rock of my salvation, my castle and my high tower, my weapon of defense and my glory, I will not yield to unbelief. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. And though all things go against me, yet will I stay myself upon the mighty God of Jacob, and I will not fear. The woman, then, had done her best.   
Note next, that although bent double and, therefore, having an excellent excuse for staying at home, yet she was found at the synagogue. I believe she was always found there from the fact that the length of time during which she had been sick was well knownnot merely known to Christ because of His Godhead, but known as a matter of common talk and common knowledge in the synagogue, probably, during the whole of the 18 years she had been an attendant there. Ah, she thought, if I miss the blessing of health, yet I will not be absent from the place where Gods people meet together for worship. I have had sweet enjoyments in the singing of the Psalms and in listening to the Wordand I will not be away when such Divine Grace is being dispensed.   
O mourners, never let Satan prevail upon you to forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is. If you cannot get comfort, still go to the sanctuary. It is the most likely place for you to get it. One of the sweet traits of character in mourners is that they love to go to the assemblies of Gods people. I knew one aged woman who had year after year been in this mournful state, and after trying long to comfort her, but in vain, I said to her, Well, what do you go to the House of Prayer for? Why dont you stay at home? Why, that is my only comfort! she said. I thought you told me you were a hypocrite, I answered, and that you had no right to the promises or any of the good things? Ah, but I could not stay away from the place where my best friends, my kindred, dwell, she replied. And do you read your Bible? I asked her. I suppose you have burned that. Burned my Bible! she said in horror. Id sooner be burned myself! But do you read it? You say there is nothing there for youif you were to lay hold upon the promises, it would be presumptionyou are afraid to grasp any one of the good things of the Covenant! Ah, but I could not do without reading my Bible. That is my daily bread. It is my constant food, she responded. But do you pray? Pray! Oh yes, I shall die praying! But you told me that you had no faith at all, that you were not one of Gods people, that you were a deceiver and I know not what besides! Yes, I am afraid, sometimes, that I am. I am afraid now that I am, but as long as I live Ill pray. All the marks of the child of God were in her private characterand could be seen in her walk and conversationand yet she was always bowed down and could by no means lift herself up!   
I remember a Brother minister who was the means, in Gods hands, of comforting a woman when she lay dying in this plight. He said to her, Well, Sarah, you tell me you do not love Christ at all. Are you sure you do not? Yes, Sir. I am sure I do not. He went up to the window and wrote on a piece of paper, I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, Sarah, he said just put your name at the bottom of that. What is it, Sir? I do not know what it is. When she read it, she said, No, Id rather be torn in pieces than Id put my name to such a thing as that! Well, he said, but if it is true, you may as well write it as say it. And this was the means of convincing and persuading her that there really was love to Christ in her soul, after all! But in many cases you cannot comfort these poor souls at all. They will still say that they are not the Lords people, yet they cling to the means of Grace and, by-and-by, we trust they will get deliverance.   
Observe another thing, that though we are not told it in so many words in the narrative, we may be sure it is true, when the Lord Jesus called her, she came at once. She was called and there was no hesitation in her answer. Such speed as she could make in her poor, pitiable plight, she made. She did not say, as another said, Lord, if You will, you can. She did not doubt His will. Nor did she imitate another and say, If You can do anything. She doubted not His power. She said nothing, but we know what she felt. There is not a trace of unbelief! There is every sign of obedience. Now, Soul, when Christ does call you, by His Grace, make haste to run to Him! When, under the preaching of the Lord, you feel as though the iceberg is beginning to melt, do not get away from the sunlight and go back to the old winter gloom! Make hay while the sun shines, says the old proverbtake care that you do the same. When God gives you a little light, prize it. Thank Him for it and ask for more. If you have got starlight, ask for moonlight. When you have got moonlight, do not sit down and weep because it is only moonlight, but ask Him for more, and He will give you sunlight, and when you have got that, be grateful, and He will give you yet more! He will make your day to be as the light of seven days, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. Think much of little mercies since you deserve none. Do not throw away these pearls because they are not the greatest that were ever found, but keep them, thank God for them, and then soon He will send you the best treasures from the treasury of His Grace.   
As soon as this woman was healed, she was, in another respect, an example to us, namely, that she glorified God. Her face did it. With what luster was it lit up! Her whole gait did it. How erect she stood! And then I am sure her tongue did it. The woman might well be pardoned for speaking this once in the midst of the assembly. Restored as she was, all of a sudden, she could not help telling out the joy she felt within! The bells of her heart were ringing merry peals! She must give glory to God who had worked the cure. Some of you profess to have been cured, but have you given glory to God? Some of you profess to be Christians, and yet you have never come forward to avow it! You have been afraid to unite yourselves with the Christian Church! Your Master bids you confess Him. The mode of confession which He prescribes is that you be baptized in His nameand yet, though He has saved you, you stand back and are disobedient. Take care! That servant which knew his lords will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.   
I was, this week, by the bedside of a dying man, an heir of Heaven, washed in the precious blood of Jesus, I believe, and rejoicing in that fact, too, but yet he could not help saying, I ought, years ago, to have taken my stand with Gods people. You have often given me many hard blows in the Tabernacle, but never too hard. Tell the people, when you speak to them again, when they know anything is a duty, never to postpone it, for that Word of God is true, That servant which knew his lords will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. I am not condemned, I am not cast away, for I am in Christ. I am resting on His precious blood and I am saved. But, though saved, I am being chastened. And he was sorely chastened with many doubts, fears and troubles of soul. If you are Gods child, any duty neglected will bring upon your soul some chastisement. If you are not Gods child, you may do very much as you like and your

punishment will, perhaps, not come upon you until the next world. But if you are one of the Kings favorites, you must walk very tenderly and very attentively, or else, as surely as you are dear to the heart of God, you shall feel the rod upon you to chasten you and to bring you back into the path of obedience!   
This woman glorified God. Brothers and Sisters, can we not do something more to glorify God than we have yet done? If we have done that which seemed to be our duty on certain occasions, may there not be yet more for us to do? There is very much land yet to be possessed for King Jesus! This wicked city is given over to sin and we are doing so little! Ah, some of you do what you can, but we who do what we can, might do more if we had more strength with which to do itand more strength is to be had for the asking! Oh, that we could enlarge our desires for the glory of King Jesus! Oh, to set Him upon a glorious high throne and to crown Him with many crowns, to prostrate ourselves at His feet and to bring others, too, to lie prostrate at His feet, that He might be King in Jeshurun, King of kings and Lord of lords, reigning in our souls forever and ever! Imitate this woman. If you have been bowed down and yet restored to comfort! See that, like she did, you instantly fall to glorifying God.   
III. And this brings us to the last pointTHE WOMANS CURE IS EXCEEDINGLY INSTRUCTIVE TO PERSONS IN A LIKE CASE.  
She went to the synagogue, but she did not get her cure alone by going there. Means and ordinances are nothing in themselves! They are to be used, but they are only dry skin bottles, without water, unless there is something more than these. This woman met with Christ in the synagogueand then came the healing! May we, too, meet with Jesus! That great encounter is possible here, or anywhere, for   
*Wherever we seek Him, He is found,   
And every place is hallowed ground.*   
The great matter is to meet with Him! And if we meet with Him, we meet with all we need!   
Now, observe the womans cure. In the first place, it was a complete cure. No part of the infirmity remained. She was not left a little crooked, but still much restored. No, she was made straight. When Jesus heals, He heals not by halves. His works of Grace may have it said of each one of them, It is finished. Salvation is a finished work throughout.   
In the next place, the womans cure was a perpetual and permanent one. She did not return, by-and-by, by a terrible relapse, to her former posture. Once made to walk upright, she remained so. When Jesus sheds abroad life, love and joy in the soul, it is ours for a perpetual inheritance and we may hold it till we die, nor lose it even then!   
Notice, too, that the woman was healed immediately. That is a point which Luke takes care to mention. The cure did not take days, or weeks, or months, or years, as physicians cures dobut she was cured immediately! Here is encouragement for you who have been depressed for years. There is yet a possibility that you may be perfectly and speedily restored. Yet may the dust be taken from your eyes! Yet may your face be anointed with fresh oil! Yet may you glow and glisten in the light of Jesus Countenance while you reflect the light that shines upon you from Him! It may happen tonightat this moment! Gates may be taken from off their hinges, for the mighty Samson, whom we serve, can tear up Gazas gates, posts and bars and all if He wills to set His captives free! If you are bound by all the fetters that self can forge, yet at one emancipating word from Christ, you shall be entirely free! Doubting Castle may be very strong, but He who comes to fight with Giant Despair is stronger, still. He who has kept you beneath his power is mighty, but the All Mighty is He who conquered at Bozrah and who will conquer everywhere else when He comes forth for the deliverance of His people! Take down your harps from the willows! Be encouraged! Jesus Christ loosens the prisoners! He is the Lord, the Liberator. He comes to set the captives free and to glorify Himself in them!   
I remind you of the thought with which we commenced this third point, namely, that the womans restoration was effected by Jesus Christ, by His laying His hands upon her. Many of His cures were worked in this way, by bringing His own Personality into contact with human infirmity. He laid His hands upon her. O Soul, Christ came in human flesh and that contact with humanity is the source of all salvation! If you believe in Christ, He comes a second time into contact with you! Oh, that your soul might get a touch of Him tonight! He is a Man like yourself, though He is also very God of very God.   
In order to save us, He suffered unutterable pangs. The whole weight of our sin was laid upon Him, till He was bruised as beneath the wheels of the car of vengeance. Beneath the upper and the nether millstones of Divine Vengeance, the Savior was ground like fine flour! God knows, and God alone knows, what agonies He bore. All this was substitutionary for sinners. Let not your sins, then, depress you. Had you no sin, you would not need a Savior. Come with your sin and trust in Him! Let not your weakness distress you. Had you no weakness, you would not need a mighty Savior. Come and take hold upon His strength, for all His strength is meant for the weak, the hopeless and the helpless. Sitting on the dunghill of your sin, yet trust in Jesus and you shall be lifted up to dwell among the princes of the blood-royal! There must be power to save in God when He becomes Man to bleed and die. Nothing can be impossible to Him who built the world and who bears the pillars thereof upon His shouldersand yet gives His hands to the nails and His heart to the spear! Nothing can be impossible to Immanuel, God With Us, when He smarts, and groans, and submits to the bloody sweat, and then empties out His hearts blood that He might redeem men from their iniquities *O come all you in whom are fixed   
The deadly stains of sin!*   
Draw near to the Crucified! Let your souls contemplate Christ. Let your faith look to Him. Let your love embrace Him. Cast away all other confidences as mere vanities that will delude you. Away with them! Trust in nothing but the Lord Jesus ChristHis Person, His work, His life, His death, His Resurrection, His Ascension, His glorious pleading before the Throne of God for sinners such as we are! Ah, when you come to die, you who are strong and you who are depressed, will be very much alike in this matterthat you will have to come back where Wesley was when he said   
*Jesus, lover of my soul,   
Let me to Your bosom flee!   
Other refuge have I none   
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.*   
Look to the wounds of Christ, they will heal your wounds! Look to the death of Christ, it will be the death of your doubts! Look to the life of Christ, it shall be the life of your hopes! Look to the glory of Christ, it shall be the glory of your souls here, and the glory of your souls forever and ever!   
May God add His blessing and bring many of His bondaged ones out of prison! This shall be to His eternal praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LUKE 13:1-13.**

Verse 1. There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. This was a matter of common town talk, so of course they brought the news to Jesus. Notice how wisely He used this shameful incident. You and I too often hear the news of what is happening, but we learn nothing from it our Saviors gracious mind turned everything to good accountHe was like the bee that gathers honey from every flower.

2. And Jesus answering said to them, Do you suppose that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? Do you imagine that there was some extraordinary guilt which brought this judgment upon them, and that those who were spared may be supposed to have been more innocent than they were?

3. I tell you, No, but except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. There would come upon them, also, because of their sin, a sudden and overwhelming calamity. When we read of the most dreadful things happening to men, we may conclude that something similar will happen to us if we are impenitentif not in this world, yet in that which is to come!

4, 5. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, do you think that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No, but, except you repent, you shall all likewise pe

rish. [See Sermon #408, Volume 7ACCIDENTS, NOT PUNISHMENTSRead/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This was a foreshadowing of

the overthrow of Jerusalem and the razing of its walls and towers to the ground which happened not long after. And even that overthrow of Jerusalem was but a rehearsal of the tremendous doom that shall come upon all who remain impenitent.

6. He spoke also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. He had a right to seek fruit upon the tree, for it was planted where fruitbearing trees were growing and where it shared in the general culture that was bestowed upon all the trees in the vineyard.

7. Then he said to the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, these three years I have been seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why let it cumber the ground? This was sound reasoning. It yields nothing, though it draws the goodness out of the ground and so injures those trees that are producing fruitcut it down; why let it cumber the ground?

8-9. And he answering said unto him, Sir, let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it, and fertilize it: and if it bears fruit, well: and if not, then

after that you shall cut it down. [See Sermons #650, Volume 11JUDGMENT THREATENING BUT MERCY SPARING and #1451-A, Volume 25THIS YEAR ALSORead/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]He asks for a respite, but only a

limited one. After that, you shall cut it down. If, after the trial of another year, it shall still be fruitless, then even the pleader will not ask for any further respite.

10, 11. And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over, and could in no way straighten herself. If she was there when Christ was speaking about the fruitless fig tree, I feel pretty certain that she said That must mean me. I am the fruitless fig tree. But the Master did not mean herHe had other words and more cheering tidings for her!

12. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, you are loosened from your infirmity. Oh, what glad news this must have been to her! How it must have thrilled her whole body! As she learned that she was to be restored to an upright position, what delight must have filled her heart!

13. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. What expressions of fervent gratitude! What notes of glad exultation came from that womans joyful lips! Surely even cherubim and seraphim could not more heartily and earnestly praise God than she did when she was made straight and glorified God.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2110 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE MUSTARD SEEDA SERMON FOR THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER   
NO. 2110

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 20, 1889, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Then said He, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden. And it grew and became   
a great tree. And the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. Luke 13:18-19.**

I SHALL not attempt fully to explain this great little parable. A full exposition may be left for another occasion. The parable may be understood to relate to our Lord Himself, who is the living Seed. You know also how His Church is the tree that springs from Him and how greatly it grows and spreads its branches until it covers the earth. From the one man Christ Jesus, despised and rejected of men, slain and buried and so hidden away from among menfrom Him, I saythere arises a multitude which no one can number.

These spread themselves, like some tree which grows by the rivers of waters and they yielded both gracious shelter and spiritual food. I called it a great little parable and so it isit has a world of teaching within the smallest compass. The parable is itself like a grain of mustard seed but its meanings are as a great tree.

At this time of the year, Sunday school teachers come together especially to pray for a blessing on their work and pastors are invited to say a word to cheer them in their self-denying service. This request I would cheerfully fulfill, and therefore my discourse will not be a full explanation of the parable, but an adaptation of it to the cheering of those who are engaged in the admirable work of teaching the young the fear of the Lord. Never service was more important. To overlook it would be a grave fault. We rejoice to encourage our friends in their labor of love.

In this parable light is thrown upon the work of those who teach the Gospel. First, notice a very simple worka grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden. Secondly, observe what came of it it grew and became a great tree. And the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

FIRST , NOTICE A VERY SIMPLE WORK. The work of teaching the Gospel is as the casting of a grain of mustard seed into a garden.   
Note, first, what the nameless man did. It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took. He took it. That is to say, picked it out from the bulk. It was only one grain and a grain of a very insignificant seed. But he did not let it lie on the shelf. He took it in his hand to put it to its proper use. A grain of mustard seed is too small a thing for public exhibition. The man who takes it in his hand is almost the only one who spies it out. It was only a grain of mustard seed but the man set it before his own mind as a distinct object to be dealt with.   
He was not sowing mustard over broad acres but he was sowing a grain of mustard seed in his garden. It is well for the teacher to know what he is going to teach, to have that Truth of God distinctly in his minds eye, as the man had the grain of mustard seed between his fingers. Depend upon it, unless a Truth is clearly seen and distinctly recognized by the teacher, little will come of it to the taught. It may be a very simple Truth, but if a someone takes it, understands it, grasps it and loves it, he will do something with it.   
Beloved, first and foremost, let us ourselves take the Gospel, let us believe it, let us appreciate it, let us prize it beyond all things. For the Truth of God lives as it is loved and no hand is so fit for its sowing as the hand which grasps it well.   
Further, in this little parable we notice that this man had a garden Like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden. Some Christian people have no gardenno personal sphere of service. They belong to the whole clan of Christians, and they pine to see the entire band go out to cultivate the whole worldbut they do not come to personal particulars. It is delightful to be warmed up by missionary addresses and to feel a zeal for the salvation of all the nations. But, after all, the net result of a general theoretic earnestness for all the world does not amount to much.   
As we should have no horticulture if people had no gardens, so we shall have no missionary work done unless each person has a mission. It is the duty of every Believer in Christ, like the first man, Adam, to have a garden to dress and to till. Children are in the Sunday schools by millionsthank God for that! But have you a class of your own? All the Church at work for Christ! Glorious theory! Are you up and doing for your Lord? It will be a grand time when every Believer has his allotment and is sowing it with the seed of the Truth of God.   
The wilderness and the solitary place will blossom as the rose when each Christian cultivates his own plot of roses. Where should this unnamed man sow his mustard seed but in his own garden? It was near him and dear to him and to it he went. Teach your own children, speak to your neighbors, seek the conversion of those whom God has especially entrusted to you.   
Having a garden and having this seed, the man sowed itand simple as this isit is the hinge of the instruction. You have a number of seeds in a pillbox. There they arelook at them! Take that box down this day a year from now, and the seeds will be just the same. Lay them by in that dry box for seven years and nothing will happen. Truth is not to be kept to ourselves. It is to be published and advocated. There is an old Proverb, truth is mighty and will prevail. The Proverb is true in a sense, but it needs to be taken with a grain of salt.   
If you put Truth away and leave it without a voice, it wont prevail. It will not even contend. When have great Truths prevailed? Why, when brave men have persisted in declaring them. Daring spirits have taken up a cause which has been at the first, unpopularand they have spoken about it so earnestly and so often that at length the cause has commanded attention. They have pressed on and on until the cause has triumphed altogether.   
The Truth of God has been mighty and has prevailed, but yet not without the people who gave it life and tongue. Not even the Gospel itself, if it is not taught, will prevail. If revealed Truth is laid on one side and kept in silence, it will not grow. Mark how through the dark ages the Gospel lay asleep in old books in the libraries of monasteries until Luther and his fellow Reformers fetched it out and sowed it in the minds of men!   
This man simply cast it into his garden. He did not wrap it around with gold leaf, or otherwise adorn ithe put it into the ground. The naked seed came into contact with the naked soil. O Teachers, do not try to make the Gospel look fine! Do not overlay it with your fine words or elaborate explanations. The Gospel seed is to be put into the young heart just as it is. Get the Truth of God concerning the Lord Jesus into the childrens minds. Make them know, not what you can say about the Truth, but what the Truth itself says. It is wicked to take the Gospel and make a peg of it to hang our old clothes upon.   
The Gospel is not a boat to be freighted with human thoughts, fine speculations, scraps of poetry and pretty tales. No, no. The Gospel is the thought of God. In and of itself it is the message which the soul needs. It is the Gospel, itself, which will grow. Take a Truth of God, especially that great doctrine that humanity is lost and that Christ is the only Savior, and see to it that you place it in the mind. Teach plainly the great Truth of God that whosoever believes in Him has everlasting life, and that the Lord Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the tree and suffered for us, the Just for the unjustI say take these Truths of God and set them forth to the mind and see what will come of it.   
Sow the Truth of God. Not your reflections on the Truth of God, not your embellishments of it, but the Truth itself. This is to be brought into contact with the mind, for the Truth is the seed, and the human mind is the soil for it to grow in.   
These remarks of mine are very plain and trite. And yet everything depends upon the simple operation described. Nearly everything has been tried in preaching of late, except the plain and clear statement of the glad tidings and of the atoning sacrifice. People have talked about what the Church can do, and what the Gospel can do. We have been informed as to the proofs of the Gospel, or the doubts about it, and so forth. But when will they give us the Gospel itself? Friends, we must come to the point and teach the

Gospelfor this is the living and incorruptible seed which abides forever.   
It is an easy thing to deliver an address upon mustard seed, to give the children a taste of the pungency of mustard, to tell them how mustard seed would grow, what kind of a tree it would produce and how the birds would sing among its branches. But this is not sowing mustard seed. It is all very fine to talk about the influence of the Gospel, the ethics of Christianity, the elevating power of the love of Christ, and so on. But what we want is the Gospel itself, which exercises that influence.   
Sow the seedtell the children the doctrine of the Cross, the fact that with the stripes of Jesus we are healed, and that by faith in Him we are justified. What is wanted is not talk about the Gospel but the Gospel itself. We must continually bring the living Word of the living God into contact with the hearts of men. Oh, for the aid of the Holy Spirit in this! He will help us, for He delights to glorify Jesus.   
That which is described in the parable was an insignificant business the man took the tiny seed and put it into his garden. It is a very commonplace affair to sit down with a dozen children around you and open your Bible and tell them the well-worn tale of how Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. No Pharisee is likely to stand and blow a trumpet when he is going to teach children. He is more likely to point to the children in the temple and sneeringly say, Hear you what these say? It is a lowly   
business altogether, but, to the mustard seed and to the man with a garden, the sowing is the all-important matter.   
The mustard seed will never grow unless put into the soil. The owner of the garden will never have a   
crop of mustard unless he sows the seed. Dear Sunday school Teacher, do not become weary of your humble work, for none can measure its importance. Tell the boys and girls of the Son of God who lived, and loved, and diedthat the ungodly might be saved. Urge them to immediate faith in the mighty Savior that they may be saved at once. Tell of the new birth, and how the souls of human beings are renewed by the Holy Spirit, without whose Divine working none can enter the kingdom of Heaven.   
Cast in mustard seed and nothing else but mustard seed, if you want to grow mustard. Teach the Gospel of Divine Grace and nothing but the Gospel of Divine Grace, if you would see Grace growing in the hearts of your young people.   
Secondly, let us consider what it was that the man sowed. We have seen that he sowed. What did he sow? It was one single seed and that seed a very small oneso very, very small, that the Jews were accustomed to say, As small as a mustard seed. Therefore the Savior speaks of it as the smallest among seeds, which it may not have been, absolutely, but which it was according to common parlance. Our Lord was not teaching botany but speaking a popular parable.   
Yes, the Gospel seems a very simple thingBelieve and live! Look to Jesus lying in the sinners place! Look to Jesus crucified, even as Israel looked to the brazen serpent lifted up upon a pole. It is simplicity itself. In fact, the Gospel is so plain a matter that our superior people are weary of it, and look for something more difficult to comprehend. People nowadays are like the person who liked to hear the Scriptures properly confounded. Or like the other who said, You should hear our minister dispense with the Truth.   
Sowing seed is work too ordinary for the moderns. They demand new methods. But, Beloved, we must not run after vain inventions. Our one business is to sow the Word of God in the minds of children. It is yours and mine to teach everybody the simple truth that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. We know nothing else among adults or among children. This one seed, apparently so little, so insignificant, we continue to sow.   
They sneeringly say, What can be the moral result of preaching such a Gospel? Surely it would be better to discourse upon morals, social economics, and the sciences? Ah, Friends, if you can do any good in those ways, we will not hinder you, but our belief is that a hundred times more can be done with the Gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believes. The Gospel is not the enemy of any good thing rather, it is the force by which good things are to be carried out!.   
Whatsoever things are pure and honest and of good repute are all nurtured by that Spirit which is begotten by the simple Gospel of Christ. But, remember, conversions do not come by essays upon moralsbut by the teaching of salvation by Christ. The cleansing and raising of our race will not be effected by politics or sciencebut by the Word of the Lordwhich lives and abides forever. To bring the greatest blessings upon our rising youth, we must labor to implant in their minds faith in the Lord Jesus. Oh, for Divine power in this work!   
But the seed, though very small, was a living thing. There is a great difference between a mustard seed and a piece of wax of the same size. Life slumbers in that seed. What life is, we cannot tell. Even if you take a microscope you cannot spy it out. It is a mystery, but it is essential to a seed. The Gospel has a something in it not readily discoverable by the philosophical inquirer, if, indeed, he can perceive it at all. Take a maxim of Socrates or of Plato, and inquire whether a nation or a tribe has ever been transformed by it from barbarism to culture.   
A maxim of a philosopher may have measurably influenced a person in some right direction but who has ever heard of a someones whole character being transformed by any observation of Confucius or Socrates? I confess I never have. Human teachings are barren. But within the Gospel with all its triteness and simplicitythere is a Divine life and that life makes all the difference. The human can never rival the Divine, for it lacks the life-fire. It is better to preach five Words of Gods Word than five million words of human wisdom.   
Human words may seem to be the wiser and more attractive, but there is no heavenly life in them. Within Gods Word, however simple it may be, there dwells an omnipotence like that of God from whose lips it came. To tell the truth, any seed is a very comprehensive thing. Within the mustard seed what is to be found? Why, there is all in it that ever comes out of it. It must be so. Every branch and every leaf and every flower and every seed that is to be is, in its essence, all within the seed. It needs to be developed but it is all there.   
And so, within the simple Gospel, how much lies concentrated? Look at it! Within that Truth lie regeneration, repentance, faith, holiness, zeal, consecration, perfection. Heaven hides itself away within the Gospel. Like a young bird in its nest, glory dwells in Divine Grace. We may not at first see all its results, nor, indeed, shall we see them at all until we sow the seed and it grows. Yet it is all there. Do you believe it, young Teacher? Have you realized what you have in your hands when you grasp the Gospel of the Grace of God?   
It is the most wonderful thing beneath the skies. Do you believe in the Gospel which you have to teach? Do you discern that within its apparently narrow lines the Eternal, the Infinite, the Perfect and the Divine are all enclosed? As in the babe of Bethlehem there was the Eternal God, so within the simple teaching of, Believe and live, there are all the elements of eternal blessedness for people and boundless glory for God. It is a very comprehensive thing, that little seed, that Gospel of God.   
And for this reason it is so wonderfulit is a Divine creation. Summon your chemists, bring them together with all their vessels and their fires. Select a jury of the greatest chemists now alive, analytical or otherwise, as you will. Learned Sirs, will you kindly make us a mustard seed? You may take a mustard seed and pound it and analyze it, and you may thus ascertain all its ingredients. So far so good. Is not your work well begun? Now make a single mustard seed. We will give you a week. It is a very small affair. You have all the elements of mustard in yonder mortar.   
Make us one living grain. We do not ask for a ton weight. One grain of mustard seed will suffice us. Great Chemists, have you not made so small a thing? A month has gone by. Only one grain of mustard seed we asked of you and where is it? Have you not made one in a month? What are you doing? Shall we allow you seven years? Yes, with all the laboratories in the kingdom at your service, and all known substances for your material, and all the worlds coal beds for your fuelget to your work. The air is black with your smoke and the streams run foul with your waste products. But where is the mustard seed?   
This baffles the wise. They cannot make a living seed. No. And nobody can make a Gospel, or even a new Gospel text. The thinkers of the age could not even concoct another life of Christ to match with the four Gospels which we have already. I go furtherthey could not create a new incident which would be congruous with the facts we already know. Plenty of novel writers nowadays can beat out imaginary histories upon their anvilslet them write a fifth Gospelsay the Gospel according to Peter, or Andrew. Let us have it!   
They will not even commence the task. Who will write a new Psalm, or even a new promise? Clever chemists prove their wisdom by saying at once, No, we cannot make a mustard seed. And wise thinkers will equally confess that they cannot make another Gospel. My learned Brethren are trying very hard to make a new Gospel for this nineteenth century, but you teachers had better go on with the old one. The advanced men cannot put life into their theory. This living Word is the finger of God. That simple grain of mustard seed must be made by God, or not at all.   
He must put life into the Gospel, or it will not have power in the heart. The Gospel of Sunday school teachers, that Gospel of, Believe and live, however people may despise it, has God-given life in it. You cannot make another which can supplant it, for you cannot put life into your invention. Go on and use the one living Truth with your children, for nothing else has Gods life in it.

I want you to see what a little affair the sowing seemed, as we answer the question, What was it to him? It was a very natural act. He sowed a seed. It is a most natural thing that we should teach others what we believe ourselves. I cannot make out how some professors can call themselves Christians and yet never communicate the faith to others. That the young people of our Churches should gather other young people around them and tell them of Jesus, whom they love, is as natural as for a gardener to put seeds into his prepared ground.   
To sow a mustard seed is a very inexpensive act. Only one grain of mustardnobody can find me a coin small enough to express its value. I do not know how much mustard seed the man hadcertainly it is not a rare thingbut he only took one grain of it and cast it into his garden. He emptied no exchequer by that expenditure. This is one of the excellencies of Sunday school workthat it neither exhausts the Church of people nor of money. However much of it is done, it does not lessen the resources of our Zion. It is done freely, quietly, without excitement, without sacrifice of lifeand yet what a fountain of blessing it is!   
Still, it was an act of faith. It is always an act of faith to sow seed, because you have, for the time, to give it up and receive nothing in return. The farmer takes his choice seed corn and throws it into the soil of his field. He might have made many a loaf of bread with it but he casts it away. Only his faith saves him from being judged a maniache expects it to return to him fifty-fold. If you had never seen a harvest, you would think that someone burying good wheat under the clods had gone mad. If you had never seen conversions, it might seem an absurd thing to be constantly teaching boys and girls the story of the Man who was nailed to the tree.   
We preach and teach as a work of faith, and remember, it is only as an act of faith that it will answer its purpose. The rule of the harvest is, According to your faith, be it unto you. Believe, dear Teacher, believe in the Gospel. Believe in what you are doing when you tell it. Believe that great results from slender causes will spring. Go on sowing your mustard seed of salvation by faith, expecting and believing that fruit will come from it. It was an act which brought the sower no honor. The Savior has chronicled the fact that the man took a grain of mustard seed and sowed it, but thousands of people had gone on sowing mustard seed for half a lifetime without a word.   
Nobody has ever spoken in your honor, my Friend, though you have taught the Truth of God. Dear Teacher, go on sowing, though nobody should observe your diligence or praise your faithfulness. Sow the seed of precious Truth in the garden of the childs mind, for much more will come of it than you have dared to hope.   
It seems to me that our Lord selected the mustard seed in this parable, not because its results are the greatest possible from a seedfor an oak or a cedar grow much greater than a mustard treebut He selected it because it is the greatest result as compared with the size of the seed. Follow out the analogy. Come to yonder school and see! That earnest young man is teaching a boy, one of those wild creatures of the street. They swarm in every quarter. A dozen young Turks are before him, or young Arabs of the street. He is teaching them the Gospel. Small affair, is it not?   
Yes, very. But what may come of it? Think of how joyfully much may grow out of this little! What is that young man teaching? Only one elementary Truth. Do not sneer. It is Truth, but it is the mere alphabet of it. He touches upon nothing deep in theology. He only says, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Dear Boy, believe in the Lord Jesus and live. That is all he says. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? The teacher, himself, is teaching the one Truth in a very poor wayat least, he thinks so.   
Ask him, when he is done, what he thinks of his own teaching and he replies, I do not feel fit to teach. Yes, that young mans teaching is sighed over and in his own judgment it is poor and weak, but there is life in the Truth he imparts and eternal results will followresults of which I have now to speak in the second part of my sermon. May the good Spirit help me so to speak as to encourage my beloved friends who have given themselves up to the Christ-like work of teaching the little ones!   
SECONDLY, let us enquire, WHAT CAME OF IT? First, it grew. That was what the sower hoped would come of ithe placed the seed in the ground hoping that it would grow. It is not reasonable to suppose that he would have sown it if he had not hoped that it would spring up. Dear Teacher, do you always sow in hope, do you trust that the Word will live and grow? If you do not, I do not think your success is very probable. Expect the Truth of God to take root and expand and grow up. Teach Divine Truth with earnestness and expect that the Life within it will unveil its wonders.   
But though the sower expected growth, he could not, himself, have made it grow. After he had placed the seed in the ground he could water it, he could pray God to make the sun shine on it, but he could not directly produce growth. Only He that made the seed could cause it to grow. Growth is a continuance of that almighty act by which life is at first given. The putting of life into the seed is Gods work, and the bringing forth of the life from the seed is Gods work, too. This is a matter within your hope, but far beyond your power.   
A very wonderful thing it is that the seed should grow. If we did not see it every day, we should be more astonished at the growth of seed than at all the wonders of magicians. A growing seed is Gods abiding miracle. You see a piece of ground near London covered with a market garden and after a few months you go by the place and you see streets and a public square and a Church and a great population. You say to yourself, It is remarkable that all these houses should have sprung up in a few months. Yet that is not at all so wonderful as for a plowed field to become covered four feet high with corn and all without the use of wagons to bring the material, or tools to work it up into a harvest.   
Without noise of hammer, or the ringing of trowelswithout handiwork of manthe whole has been done. Wonder at the growth of Divine Grace! See how it increases, deepens, strengthens! Growth in Grace is a marvel of Divine love. That a person should repent through the Gospel, that he should believe in Jesus, that he should be totally changed, that he should have a hope of Heaven, that he should receive power to become a child of Godthese are all marvelous things. Yet they are going on under our eyes and we fail to admire them as we should. The growth of holiness in such fallen creatures as we are is the admiration of angels, the delight of all intelligent beings.   
To the sower, this growth was very pleasing. How pleasant it is to see the seed of Divine Grace grow in children! Do you not remember when you first sowed mustard and cress as a child, how the very next morning you went and turned the ground up to see how much it had grown? How pleased you were when you saw the little yellow shoots, and afterward a green leaf or two! So is it with the true teacherhe or she is anxious to see growth and makes eager inquiry for it. What was expected is taking place, and it is most delightful to that teacher, whatever it may be to others.   
An unsympathetic person cries, Oh, I do not think anything of that childs emotions. It is merely a passing impressionhe will soon forget it. The teacher does not think so. The cold critic says, I dont think much of a childs weeping. Childrens tears lie very near the surface. But the teacher is full of hope that in these tears is a real sorrow for sin and an earnest seeking after the Lord. The questioner says, It is nothing for a child to say that he gives his heart to Jesus. Youngsters soon think that they believe. They are so easily led.   
People talk thus because they do not love children and live with the desire to save them. If you sympathize with children, you are pleased with every hopeful token, and are on the watch for every mark of Divine life within them. If you are a florist, you will see more of the progress of your plants than if you are no gardener and have no interest in such things. Think, then, of what my text saysIt grew. Oh, for a prayer just now from all of you this morning, Lord, make the Gospel grow wherever it falls! Whether the preacher scatters it, or the teacher sows it. Whether it falls among the aged people, or the youngLord, make the Gospel grow! Pray hard for it, Friends! You cannot make it grow, but you can prevail with God to bless it to His honor and praise.   
Next, having started growing, it became a tree. Luke says, It became a great tree. It was great in itself, but the greatness was seen mainly in comparison with the size of the seed. The growth was great. Here is the wondernot that it became a treebut that, being a mustard seed, it should become a great tree. Do you see the point of the parable? I have already brought it before you. Listen! It was only a word spokenDear boy, look to Jesus. Only such a word and a soul was saved, its sin was forgivenits whole being was changeda new heir of Heaven was born!   
Do you see the growth? A word produces salvation! A grain of mustard seed becomes a great tree! A little teaching brings eternal life. That is not allthe teacher, with many prayers and tears, took her girl home and pleaded with her for Christ and the girl was led to yield her heart to the dominion of Christ Jesusa holy, heavenly life came out of that pleading. See! She becomes a thoughtful girl, a loving wife, a gracious mother, a matron in Israelsuch an one as Dorcas among the poor, or Hannah with her Samuel.   
What a great result from a little cause! The teachers words were tearfully spoken. They could not have been printed, for they were far too broken and childlike. But they were, in Gods hands, the means of fashioning a life most sweet, most chaste, most beautiful!

A boy was about as wild as any roamer of our streets. A teacher knelt by his side with his arm about the lads neck. He pleaded with God for the boy and with the boy for God. That boy was converted and as a youth in business he was an example to the workroom. As a father he was a guide to his household. As a man of God he was a light to all around. As a preacher of righteousness he adorned the doctrine of God, his Savior, in all things. There is much more which I might easily picture, but you can work it out as well as I can. All that is to be desired may spring out of the simple talk of a humble Christian with a youth. A mustard seed becomes a great treea few words of holy admonition may produce a noble life.   
But is that all? Beloved, our teaching may preserve souls from the deep darkness of the abode of the lost. A soul left to itself might hurry down from folly to vice, from vice to obduracy, from obduracy to fixed resolve to perish. But by the means of loving teaching, all this is changed. Rescued from the power of sin, like a lamb snatched from between the jaws of the lion, the youth is now no longer the victim of vice but seeks holy and heavenly things. Hell has lost its prey, and see up yonder! Heavens wide gate has received a precious soul. Sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem many have come who were led there from the Sunday school.   
They who once were foul are now white-robed, washed in the blood of the Lamb. Hearken to their songs of praise! You may keep on listening, for those songs will never come to an end. All this was brought about through a brief address of a trembling brother who stood up one Sunday afternoon to close the school and talk a little about the Cross of Jesus. Or all this came of a gentle sister who could never have spoken in public, yet was enabled to warn a young girl who was growing giddy and seemed likely to go sadly astray. Wonderful that a souls taking the road to Heaven or to Hell should be made, in the purpose of God, to hinge upon the humble endeavors of a weak but faithful teacher! You see how the mustard seed grew until it became a great tree.   
This great tree became a shelterthe fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. Mustard in the East does grow very large, indeed. The most common kind of it may be found eight or ten feet high but there is a kind which will grow almost like a forest tree. There probably were some of these latter trees in the sheltered region wherein our Lord was speaking. A mustard which grew here and there in Palestine was of surprising dimensions. When the tree grew, the birds came to it.   
Here we have unexpected influences. Think of it. That man took a mustard seed which you could hardly see if I held it up. When he took the mustard seedwhen he put it into his gardenhad he any thought of bringing birds to that spot? Not he. You do not know all you are doing when you are teaching a child the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. When you are trying to bring a soul to Christ, your action has ten thousand hooks to it and these may seize on innumerable things. Holy teaching is the opening of a well and no one knows all the effects which the waters will produce on that spot.  
There seems no link between sowing a grain of mustard seed and birds of the air, but the winged wanderers soon made a happy connection. There may seem no connection between teaching that boy and the reclaiming of cannibals in New Guinea, but I can see a very possible connection. Tribes in Central Africa may have their destiny shaped by your instruction of a tiny child. When John Pounds bribed an urchin with a hot potato to come and learn to read the Bible, I am sure John Pounds had no idea at all of the Ragged Schools in London, but there is a clear line of cause and effect in the whole matter. A hot potato might be the coat of arms of the Ragged School Union.  
When Nasmyth went about from house to house visiting in the slums of London, I do not suppose that he saw in his act the founding of the London City Mission and all the Country Town Missions. No one can tell the end of his beginnings, the growth of his sowings. Go on doing good in little ways and you shall one day wonder at the great results. Do the next thing that lies before you. Do it well. Do it unto the Lord. Leave results with His unbounded liberality of love, but hope to reap at least a hundredfold.   
How many fowls came and roosted under that one mustard tree I do not know. How many birds in a day, how many birds in the year, came and found a resting place and picked the seeds they loved so well, I cannot tell. When one person is converted, how many may receive a blessing out of him, none can tell. Now is the day for romancesour literature is drenched with tales religious or irreligious. What stories might be written concerning benefits bestowed, directly and indirectly, by a single godly man or woman! When you have written a thrilling story upon the subject, I can assure you I can match it with something better, still. One single individual can scatter benedictions across a continent and belt the world with blessing.   
But what is that I hear? I see this mustard treeit is a very wonderful tree. But I not only see, I hear! Music! Music! The birds! The birds! It is early morning, the sun is scarcely upwhat torrents of song! Is that the way to produce music? Shall I sow mustard seed and reap songs? I thought we must buy an organ, or purchase a violin, or buy some wind or stringed instrument, to produce musicbut here is a new plan altogether! Nebuchadnezzar had his flutes, harps, sackbuts, psaltery, dulcimers, and all kinds of musicbut all that mingled sound could not rival the melody of birds. I shall sow mustard seed now and get music in Gods own way.   
Friends, when you teach your children the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, you are sowing the music of Heaven. Every time you tell the tidings of pardon bought with blood, you are filling the choirs of Glory with sweet voices which, to the Eternal Name, shall day and night sing out songs of devout gratitude. Go on, then, if this is to be the result. If even Heavens high harmonies depend upon the simple teaching of a Ragged School, let us never cease from our hallowed service.  
Having said so much, I now close with these three practical observations. Are we not highly honored to be entrusted with such a marvelous thing as the Gospel? If it is a seed comprehending so much within it which will come to so much if it is properly used, blessed and happy are we to have such good news to proclaim! I thought this morning, when I awoke into the damp, and rain, and felt my bones complaining, I shall be glad when four more Sundays shall have gone and I shall be free to take a little rest in a sunnier clime.   
Jaded in mind and weary in spirit, I braced myself with this reflection what blessed work I have to do! What a glorious Gospel have I to preach! I ought to be a very happy man, to have such glad tidings to bear to my fellows. I said to myself, So I am. Well now, Beloved Teacher, next Sunday when you leave your bed and say, I have had a hard weeks work and I could half wish that I had not to go to my class, answer yourself thus But I am a happy person to have to talk to children about Christ Jesus. If I had to teach them arithmetic or carpentering, I might get tired of itbut to talk about Jesus, whom I lovewhy, it is a joy forever!   
Let us be encouraged to sow the good seed in evil times. If we do not see the Gospel prospering elsewhere, let us not despair. If there were no more mustard seed in the world, and I had only one grain of it, I should be all the more anxious to sow it. You can produce any quantity if only one seed will grow. So now today there is not very much Gospel about the Church has given it upa great many preachers preach everything but the living Truth of God.   
This is sad but it is a strong reason why you and I should teach more Gospel than ever. I have often thought to myself that other men may teach socialism, deliver lectures, or collect a band of fiddlers that they may gather a congregationbut I will preach the Gospel. I will preach more Gospel than ever, if I can. I will stick more to the one cardinal point. The others can attend to the odds and ends but I will keep to Christ Crucified. To those of vast ability who are looking to the events of the day I would say, Allow one poor fool to keep on preaching the Gospel.   
Beloved Teachers, be fools for Christ, and keep to the Gospel! Dont be afraid. It has life in it and it will growonly you bring it out and let it grow. I am sometimes afraid that we may prepare our sermons and addresses too much, so as to make ourselves shine. If so, we are like the man who tried to grow potatoeshe never grew any and he wondered muchfor, said he, I very carefully boiled them for hours. So, it is very possible to extract all the life out of the Gospel and put so much of yourself into it that Christ will not bless it.   
And, lastly, we are bound to do it. If so much will come out of so little, we are bound to go for it. Nowadays people want ten percent for their money. Hosts of fools are readily caught by any scheme or speculation or limited liability company that promises to give them immense dividends! I would like to make you wise by inviting you to an investment which is sure. Sow a mustard seed and grow a tree. Talk of Christ and save a soulthat soul saved will be a blessing for ages and a joy to God throughout eternity.   
Was there ever such an investment as this? Let us go on with it. If on our simple word eternity is hung, let us speak with all our heart. Life, death, and Hell, and worlds unknown hang on the lips of the earnest teacher of the Gospel of Jesus. Let us never cease speaking while we have breath in our bodies. The Lord bless you! Amen and Amen.

**Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon: Matthew 13:1-23.** HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK916, 643, 30.   
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #3560 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

**THE STRAIT GATE   
NO. 3560**

**A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 1917.   
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.   
Luke 13:24.**

THE precepts of our Lord Jesus Christ are dictated by the soundest wisdom. He has given us Divine Prescriptions for the health of our souls and His Commandments, though clothed with Sovereign Authority, are spoken in such infinite kindness that we may regard them as the advice of a true and faithful Friend. This is not a legal, but a Gospel exhortation, Strive to enter in at the strait gate. He, Himself, is the only gate, or the door, by which we can find admission, and the way to enter in through Jesus Christ is not by working, but by believing! Then, as to the strife we are urged to carry on, it is an earnest endeavor to steer clear of all the rocks, shoals and quicksands of popular fallacies and deceitful traditions, and to sail in the deep waters with His Covenant for our chart, and His Word for our compass, in simple obedience to His statutes, trusting to Him as our Pilot, whose voice we always hear, though His face we cannot see. The storm signal may well awaken your fears, but the cry of peril had need excite your caution. The mere mention sounds like a menace. Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Listen to that warning, lest you be among the, many that founderperhaps you shall be among the few that escape. Listen to what Jesus tells you shall come to pass with the multitude, that it may never come to pass with you as individuals. Mark now

I. A GATE WHICH IT IS MOST DESIRABLE TO ENTER.   
Surely many would not seek to enter if they were not convinced of the desirableness of passing through it! The very fact that so many, although they fail, will at least seek to enter, proves that there is a desire, a reason and a motive why men and women should aim to enter.   
This gatethat is, Christit is most desirable for us to pass through because it is the gate of the City of Refuge. Cities of refuge were appointed for men-slayers, who, when they were pursued by the avenger of blood, they might pass the gate and be secure within the sanctuary or city. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is intended as a refuge for those who have broken the Law of God, whom vengeance is pursuing, who will certainly be overtaken, to their eternal destruction, unless they fly to Christ and find shelter in Him. Outside of Christ the sword of fire pursues us swift and sharp. From Gods wrath there is but one escapeand that is by a simple faith in Christ. Believe in Him and the sword is sheathed, and the energy and the love of God will become your everlasting portion! But refuse to believe in Jesus and your innumerable sins, written in His book, shall be laid at your door in that day when the pillars of Heaven shall reel and the stars shall fall like withered fig leaves from the tree! Oh, who would not wish to escape from the wrath to come! Mr. Whitefield, when preaching, would often hold up his hands and cry, Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come! There is more weight and meaning in these words than tongue can tell or heart conceive. The wrath to come! the wrath to come! When past that Gate, like Noah after he had passed into the ark, you are safe from the overwhelming delugeyou are sheltered from the devouring conflagration which shall consume the earthyou are rescued from the death and the doom that await the countless multitudes of the impenitent! Who would not wish to enter where there is salvation, the only place where salvation can be found?   
It is desirable to enter this gate because it is the gate of a home. There is sweet music in that word, home. Jesus is the home of His peoples hearts. We are at rest when we get to Christ. We have all we need when we have Jesus. Happiness is the portion of the Christian in this life while he lives upon his Savior. I have seen outside in the night refugee crowds of persons waiting an hour beforehand, till the doors were opened. Poor souls! Shivering in the cold, but in expectation of being warmed and comforted in a little time for a little while, when they would be admitted. What do you think, O homeless men and womenwere there a permanent home for you, a home from which you never could be banished, a home into which you could be introduced as dear childrenwould it not be worth your while to wait for a long time at the door, and to knock again and again right vehemently, could you but ultimately gain admission? Jesus is a home for the homeless, a rest for the weary, a comfort for the comfortless. Is your heart brokenJesus can comfort you! Have you been banished from your family, or one by one have the dear ones been taken to their last resting place? Do you feel solitary, friendless, cheerless, accounting the black flowing river to be preferred before this troubled stream of life, and that pitiless society of men and women, all eager for gain and gaiety, reckoning nothing of your griefs or your groans? Oh, come to Jesus! Trust in Him and He will light up a star in the black midnight sky! He will kindle a fire in your hearts that shall make them glow with joy and comfort, even now! It were worthwhile to be a Christian, irrespective of the hereafter. Such present comfort as a belief in Jesus imparts is an inestimable compensation! This is the gate of refuge, and it is the gate of a home.   
Moreover, it leads to a blessed feast. We read just now of the supper that was spread. Jesus does not feed our bodies, but He does what is betterHe feeds our minds. A hungry stomach is terrible, but a hungry heart is far more dreadful, for a loaf of bread will fill the one, but what can satisfy the other? Oh, when the heart gets to craving, and pining, and yearning after something it cannot get, it is like the sea that cannot restit is like the grave that never can be filledit is like the horseleech, whose daughters cry, Give, give, give! Happy the man who believes in Jesus, for he becomes at once a contented man. Not only does he find rest in Christ, but joy and gladness, peace and abiding satisfaction are the portion of his lot. I tell you what I do knowand I would not lie, even for the Lord, HimselfI tell you that there is a mirth to be found in faith in Christ which cannot be matched! Speak of their buoyant spirits who make merry in the dance, or of the festive glee of those that are filled with wine? It is but the crackling of a handful of thorns under a pot how soon it is gone! But the joy of the man who meditates on the love of Christ which embraces him, on the blood of Christ which cleanses him, on the arm of Christ which upholds him, on the hand of Christ which leads him, on the crown of Christ which is to be his portionthe joy of such a man is constant, deep, overflowing, beyond the power of expression! The poorest Christian in all the worldbedridden, living on parish allowance, full of pains and ready to diewhen his heart is stayed upon Christ, would not change places with the youngest, brightest, richest, noblest spirit to be found outside the Church of God! No, kings and emperors, boast no more of your beggarly crownstheir glitter will soon fade! Your purple robes will soon be moth eaten! Your silver shall soon be cankeredof your palace, not a stone shall be left upon its fellow! Bitter shall be the dregs of your wine cups and all your music shall end in discord! I tell you that the poorest of all the company of the faithful in Christ Jesus excel you, and would not change their blest estate for all that earth calls good or great. So abundantly worthwhile is it to come to Christ for the happiness, as well as the repose, which we find in Him.   
Well likewise, dear Friends, may men desire to pass through the strait gate, knowing it is the gate which leads to Paradise. There was one gate of Paradise through which our fatherAdamand our motherEve went weeping as they left the Garden all behind them to wander into the desert world. Can you picture them to yourselves, with the cherubim behind them and the flaming sword bidding them be gone, for Paradise was no place for rebels? Men have wandered up and down the world since then to find the gate of Paradise, that they might enter yet again. They have scaled the peaks of Sinai, but they have not found it there. They have traversed the tracks of the wilderness, weary and footsore, jaded and faint, but they have found no gate to Paradise anywhere in all their expeditions. The scholar has searched for it in the ancient books. The astronomer has hunted for it among the stars. Sages, as they were called, have sought to find it by studying their artsand fools have tried to find it among their viols and their bowls. But there is only one gate! Look, there it is! It is in the form of a cross, and he that will find the gate of Heaven finds the Cross and the Man that did hang thereon! Happy he who can come up to it and pass through it, reposing all his confidence in the Atonement once made by the Man of Suffering on Calvarys tree. On earth he is saved, and in the article of death he shall pass through that gate of pearl unchallenged, walk the streets of gold unabashed and bow before the excellent Glory without a fear! He is free in Heaven. The Cross is a mark of a citizen of the skies! Having truly believed in Jesus, everlasting happiness is his beyond all doubt! Who, then, would not pass through the strait gate?   
And who would not wish to pass through it when he considers what will be the lot of those outside the gate? How we tremble at the thought of that outer darkness where shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth! There are many enquiries, nowadays, about eternal punishment. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, do not rashly or carelessly challenge the bitter experience of such condemnation! Speculate as you will about the Doctrine, but I pray you do not trifle with the reality. To be lost forever, let that mean what it may, will be more than you can bear though your ribs were iron and your bones were brass. Tempt not the avenging angel! Beware that you forget not God, lest He tear you in pieces and there be no one to deliver you! By the living God, I pray you fear and tremble, lest you be found out of Chris in the day of His appearing. Rest not, be not patient, much less merry, till you are saved! To be in danger of the fire of Hell is a peril that no heart can adequately realize, no language fitly paint! Oh, I beseech you, halt not, give yourself no rest till you have got beyond that danger! Flee for your lives, for the fiery shower will soon descend! Escape! God, in His mercy, quicken your pace that you may escape soon, lest the hour of mercy cease and the Day of Judgment come! Surely these are reasons enough for wanting to pass in at the strait gate! Observe still further what our Lord tells us.

II. THERE IS A CROWD OF PEOPLE WHO WILL SEEK TO ENTER AND WILL NOT BE ABLE.   
Who are these? If you look closely at the crowd who this day seek to pass, I think you will see a considerable difference between seeking and striving. You are not merely advised to seekyou are urgently bid to strive. Striving is a more vehement exercise than seeking. Are you among those who coolly seek admission because, forsooth, they suppose it is the proper thing? Many there are who come up to the gate of mercy and seek to enter, not striving, not particularly anxious, certainly far enough from being agitated. And when they look at the gate, they object to the lintel because it is too low, nor will they deign to stoop. There is no believing in Jesus with a proud heart! He that trusts Christ must feel himself to be guilty, and acknowledge it. He never will savingly believe till he has been thoroughly convinced of sin. But many say, I will never stoop to that. Unless I have something to do in the work, and share some of the merit, I cannot enter. No, Sirs, some of you are quite unable to believe in Christ because you believe in yourselves! As long as a man thinks himself a fine fellow, how can he think well of Jesus? You eclipse the sun! You hold up your own little hands before the sunlighthow can you expect to see? You are too good to go to Heaven, or, at least, too good in your own apprehension. Oh, Man, I pray God will prick that bubble, that blown-up bladder, and let out the gas so that you may discern what you really are, for you are nothing, after all, but a poor worm, contemptible, notwithstanding your conceit and pride, in spite of your poverty, an arrogant worm, that dares to lift up its head when it has nothing to glory in! Oh, bow yourself in lowly self-abhorrence, otherwise you may seek to enter, but shall not be able!   
Some are unable to enter because the pride of life will not let them. They come to this gate in their carriage and pair, and expect to drive in, but they cannot get admission. There is no different way of salvation for a peer of the realm than for a pauper in the workhouse! The greatest prince that ever lived must trust Jesus just as the poorest peasant does. I recollect a minister once telling me that he attended the bedside of a very proud woman, of considerable wealth, and she said to him, Do you think, Sir, that when I am in Heaven, such a person as Bettymy maidwill be in the same place as I am? I never could endure her company here. She is a good servant in her way, but I am sure I could not put up with her in Heaven. No, Madam, he said, I do not suppose you will ever be where Betty will be. He knew Betty to be one of the humblest and most consistent of Christian women anywhereand he might have told her proud mistress that in the sight of God, meekness is preferable to majesty. The Lord Jesus, in the day of His coming, will wipe out all such distinctions as may very properly exist on earth, though they cannot be recognized beyond the skies. Oh, rich man, glory not in your richest! All your wealth, if you could take it with you, would not buy a single paving stone in the streets of Heaven! Do not trust in this poor stuff! Oh, lay it aside as a crown of glorying, and pass humbly through the gate with Lazarus!   
Some are unable to enter because they carry contraband goods with them. When you land in France, there stands the gendarme who wants to see what you are carrying in that basket. If you attempt to push by, you will soon find yourself in custody. He must know what is there contraband goods cannot be taken in. So at the gate of mercy which is Christ, no man can be saved if he desires to keep his sins. He must give up every false way. Oh, says the drunk, Id like to get to Heaven, but I must smuggle in this bottle somehow. I would like to be a Christian, says another. I do not mind taking Dr. Watts hymns with me, but I should like, sometimes, to sing a Bacchanalian song, or a light serenade. Well, cries another, I enjoy myself on Sunday with Gods people, but you must not deny me the amusements of the world during the weekI cannot give them up. Well then you cannot enter, for Jesus Christ never saves us in our sinsHe saves us from our sins. Doctor, says the fool, make me well, but Id like to keep my fever. No, says the doctor, how can you be well while you keep the fever? How can a man be saved from his sins while he clings to his sins? What is salvation but to be delivered from sin? Sin lovers may seek to be saved, but they shall not be ablewhile they hug their sinsthey cannot have Christ! Some of you are in this grievous predicament. You have been attending this House of Prayer a good long time. I do not know what hinders you, but this I do know, there is a worm somewhere eating out the heart of that fair looking apple. Some private sin that you pamper is destroying your souls! Oh, that you had Grace to give it up and to come in by the strait gate, trusting in Jesus Christ!   
Not a few are unable to enter in because they want to postpone the matter until tomorrow. Today, at any rate, you are engaged with other plans and projects. A little longer let me revel in some of the sensual enjoyments of life, and afterwards I will come in. Procrastinators are among the most hopeless of people! He that has tomorrow quivering on his lips is never likely to have Grace reigning in his heart.   
Others, and these are in the worst plight of all, think that they are in and that they have entered. They mistake the outside of the gate for the inside! A strange mistake to fall into, but many do thus delude themselves. They rub their backs against the posts and then they tell us they are as near Heaven as anybody else. They have never passed the thresholdthey have never found shelter in Christalbeit they may have felt wonderfully excited at a revival meeting, and sung as loudly and lustily as any of the congregation   
*I do believe, I will believe.*   
There is a considerable show of reformation about them. Although they have not got a new garment, they have mended up the old one. They are not new creatures, but still, they are better behaved creatures than they were before! And they are, all right. Be not deceived, my dear Friends! Beware of mistaking a work of nature for the operation of Gods Grace. Do not be taken in by the devils counterfeits. They are well madethey look genuinewhen they are brand new they shine and glitter like fine gold, but they will not stand the test! Everyone of them will have a nail driven through them one daythey will never pass current with God. If you have a religion, let it be real and true, not feigned and hypocritical! Of all cheats, the man who cheats himself is certainly the least wise and, I think he is the least honest. Do not play the knave with your own soul! Suspect yourself too much rather than too little. Better journey to Heaven in terror of Hell than dream of the happy land while drifting in the other direction. Ah, that deceit should steal such gentle shapes! Be on your guard, everyone of you. Let not anyone deceive himself!   
Thus it is that a crowdI had almost said a countless crowdof people nowadays seek to enter in, but for manifold reasons they are not able to do so. And yet there is a more appalling aspect to the same fact. Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. The dying are not able. Panic-stricken, the dying man sends for the minister whom he never went to hear when his health was good and hours hung heavy in his hands. The charm of Sundays lay in their dissipationan excursion up the river, or a cheap trip to Brighton and backanything, everything, sooner than hear the Gospel! He never read his Bible. He never prayed. Now the doctor shakes his head and the nurse suggests that they fetch a clergyman. Poor soul! She means right, but what do you think he can do? What can we ministers do for you? What can any man do for his fellow creature? None of us can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him. He begins to seek, when, alas, he cannot think, poor fellow, for he is in articulo mortis, with the throes of his last struggle! His head swims, pains grow at his vitals, a glassy film is over his eyes, rambling words fall from his lips. Could he think, he has got something else to think about than the dread future that awaits him! Look at his weeping wife. See those dear children, brought in to get a last kiss from their father? Were his mind more vigorous, it were not likely to be taken up with spiritual thoughtsthere is too much in the solemn farewell to occupy the moments left in preparation for the future. Pray for me, Sir, he says, with fainting, failing breath. Yes, he is seeking to enter in! In 99 cases out of a 100 I fear the answer is, he shall not be able. Little hope have I for deathbed repentances. Never trust to them, I beseech you!   
Such a vestibule as a deathbed you may never have. To die in the street may be your lot. Should you have a deathbed, you will have something else to think about besides religion. Oh, how often have I heard Christian men say, when they have been dying, Ah, Sir, if I had a God to seek now, what a misery it would be! What a blessing it is that, with all the cares that now come upon me, I have a sure and certain hope in Christ, for I found Him years ago. Oh, dear Hearers, do not be among those who postpone and procrastinate, till, in a dying hour, after a fashion, you seek to enter and find you shall not be able!   
Some years ago I was awakened about three oclock in the morning by a sharp ring of the doorbell. I was urged without delay to visit a house not very far off London Bridge. I went and up two flights of stairs I was shown into a room, the occupants of which were a nurse and a dying man. There was nobody else. Oh, Sir, she said, Mr. So-and-So, about half an hour ago, begged me to send for you. What does he want? I asked. He is dying, Sir, she replied. I said, I see that. What sort of a man was he? He came home last night, Sir, from Brighton. He had been out all day. I looked for a Bible, Sir, but there is not one in the house. I hope you have got one with you. Oh, I said, a Bible would be of no use to him, now! If he could understand me, I could tell him the way of salvation in the very words of Holy Scripture. I spoke to him, but he gave me no answer. I spoke againstill there was no reply. All sense had fled. I stood a few minutes gazing at his face, till I perceived he was deadhis soul had departed. That man in his lifetime had been known to jeer at me. In strong language he had often denounced me as a hypocrite. Yet he was no sooner smitten with the darts of death than he sought my presence and my counsel, feeling in his heart, no doubt, that I was a servant of God, though he did not care to acknowledge it with his lips. There I stood, unable to help him. Promptly as I had responded to his call, what could I do but look at his corpse and go home again? He had, when too late, sighed for the ministry of reconciliation, sought to enter in, but he was not able. There was no space left him, then, for repentancehe had wasted the opportunity. Therefore, I pray and beseech you, my dear Hearers, by the near approach of deathit may be much nearer than you thinkgive earnest heed to these things! I look round in this building and note the pews and sittings from which hearers, whose faces were once familiar to us have gonesome to Glory, some I know not where. God knows. Oh, let not the next removal, if it is yours, vacate the seat of a scoffer, or of a neglecter, or of one who, having been touched in his conscience, silenced the secret monitor and would not turn! As the Lord lives, you must turn or burn! You must either repent or be ruined forever! May God give you wisdom to choose the better part!

It appears from Scripture that even after death there will be some who will seek to enter and shall not be able. I do not attempt to explain what I cannot understand, but I find the Master represents those on the left hand asking a question, When saw we You hungry, and fed You not? As if they had some glimmering hope that the sentence upon them might be reversed. And I read in another place of those who will come and knock at the door, and say, Lord, Lord, open to us. But the Master of the house, having already risen up and shut the door, will answer, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not. Is there, then, such a thing as prayer in Hell? When the soul has passed out of the body without hope, will it seek for hope hereafter? Perhaps so. Did not the rich man pray to Abraham to send Lazarus? It is but natural to expect that, as they doubted Gods promises on earth, they may doubt Gods threats in Hell, and may hope, perhaps, that there will be a way of escape. They will seek, they will seek, but they shall not be able, not able to enter Heaven! They said they were not able on earththey shall find they are not able in Hell, either! Non possumus is the sinners cry. We are not able to leave our sins! We are not able to believe! We are not able to be serious! We are not able to be prayerful! And then, how it will be thrown back into their teeth! Not able to enter Heaven, not able to escape from torment, not able to live, not able to dienot able because the gate of Heaven admits no sinner who has not been washed in the Redeemers blood! Back with you, Sir! You would not come to the Fountain, you would not wash! Back with you! You are not able! Not able because Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, and you never thought of preparation! Away with you, Sir! How can you enter when you are not prepared? Heaven is a place for which a fitness is needed. Men cannot enjoy that which would be contrary to their natures. Away with you, Sirs! You could not enjoy Heaven if you were admitted, for you are not changed in heart! Away with you!   
What? Do you linger? Do you cry? Do you pray? Do you weep? Do you entreat? Away with you! No, the angels shall sweep you away, for is it not writtenYou yourselves shall be thrust outunceremoniously driven and scourged away from the gate of Glory because you would not come to the gate of Grace? These are terrible things to utter. I well might shrink from speaking thus, were it not that fidelity to your souls makes such demands that I must ring the warning. If you die without faith in Christ, behold there is a gulf fixed between you and Heaven. I do not know what that means, but I know what idea it gives to me, and should give to you. Between Heaven and Hell there is no traffic! None ever passed from Hell to Heaven   
*There are no acts of pardon passed   
In the cold grave to which we hasten!   
But darkness, death, and long despair   
Reign in eternal silence there!*   
They would gladly pass the gulfwere it fire, they could be glad to pass it! Were it full of torments, many and manifold as a Spanish Inquisition could inventthey would be glad to bear themcould they but hope to cross the gulf. But no, the voice is heardan angels voiceHe that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is unjust, let him be unjust still. The wax has cooledyou cannot alter the impression. The die is castyou cannot remold it. The tree has fallenthere it lies.   
I wish I could speak now in words that would burn their way right into your inmost hearts. Alas, I cannot. I must, however, just repeat the text again, and leave it with you. Many shall seek in that dread day to enter, but shall not be able. Oh, enter then, enter! Enter now, while yet the gate stands wide open and mercy bids you come! Make haste to enter while yet the avenging angel lingers, and the angel of mercy stands with outstretched arms and cries, Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely. May God, the ever-blessed Spirit, without whom no warning can be effectual, and no invitation can be attractive, sweetly compel you to trust Christ tonight! Here is the Gospel in a few words Jesus suffered the wrath and torment we justly merited. He doubtless bore the penalty of your transgressions if you penitently believe in His Sacrifice. When you trust in Him for pardon, tis proof your sins were laid on Him for judgment! You are, therefore, a forgiven man! A pardoned woman! You are savedsaved forever! If you have a simple, child-like trust, you may go home singing for joy of heart, knowing that you have already entered the strait gate! And Grace on earth and glory in Heaven lie before you! May God bless you richly, and may you adore Him gratefully, for His dear names 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 #475 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SELF-DELUSION   
NO. 475

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 19, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able. Luke 13:24.**

EVERY wise merchant will occasionally hold a stock-taking, when he will cast up his accounts, examine what he has on hand, and ascertain decisively whether his trade is prosperous or declining. Every man who is wise in the kingdom of Heaven, will do the same by himself. He will cry, Search me, O God and try me. And he will frequently set apart special seasons for self-examination, to discover whether things are right between God and his soul. The God whom we worship is a great heart-searcher. Of old His servants knew Him as, the Lord which searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men.

We who are called to be the mouth for God unto the people feel ourselves impelled to stir you up in His name to make diligent search, for we would not have you come short of the promised rest. We should be unfaithful to your souls if we did not warn you against deception, and excite you to solemn trial of your state. That which every wise man does, that which God Himself does with you, I may well exhort you to do with yourselves this morning.

O may God help you to deal very faithfully with your own hearts. Let the oldest Saint here look well to the fundamentals of his piety, for gray heads may cover black hearts. And let not the young Believer, in the first flush of his joyous faith, despise the word of warning, for the greenness of youth may be joined to the rottenness of hypocrisy.

I shall not, this morning, aim to introduce doubts and fears into your minds. No, verily, I rather hope that the rough winds of self-examination may help to drive them away. It is not security, but carnal security, which we would kill. Not confidence, but fleshly confidence, which we would overthrow. Not peace, but false peace which we would destroy. I am sure I am right in taking such a text as this, and in desiring to force it home upon your attention. For Christ, speaking to His own disciples, says, I say unto YOU.

Notice with great care how He repeats the personal pronoun, you, you, yourselves, some twelve times in a few verses. As if this were a matter especially belonging to professorsa subject which ought to come under our immediate notice, not as having reference to aliens and foreigners from the commonwealth of Israel, but to us, the professed followers of Jesus.

Let us bow our strength to our solemn work at once. O great Master of assemblies, make our words as goads to the conscience, and fasten them as nails in the memory!

I. Our first remark is thisMANY PROFESSORS ABE DECEIVED. So the text teaches us. It does not say, a few may be misled, but many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. That many professors are deceived is clear enough from the language of Christ Himself, both here and in other places. For instance, Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be

likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise and five were foolish.

We hope that in our Churches we have not such a division as this! It were a fearful thing to contemplate only one half as sincere, and the other half graceless, having the lamp of profession, without the secret vessel of spiritual life! Yet, so alarming a proportion as five out of ten should make us search ourselves very carefully, lest we are found among the virgins, and among the virgins having lamps, yes, and among those whose lamps are burningand yet should be cast away as having no oil in our vessels!

Remember how the Master in another parable puts the multitude of the lost clearly before usWhen the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the Throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand but the goats on the left. Now, by these goats are meant those who are in the flock but are not sheep.

A separation is needed, for they once were mingled. Yes, so mingled that they had a sort of hope, and were able impudently to pleadLord, when did we see You hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto You? Yet I do not discover in the parable that there were more sheep than goats. I find, at any rate, that the goats did make up a very considerable multitude. And though they expected to receive the benediction with the blessed, He said, Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Remember, also, another parable of our Savior, where the sower went forth to sow his seed. Here there were three places where the seed fell in vain, and only one where it brought forth fruit. And, out of the three where it fell in vain, there were two that must be numbered with professors. In the one case it fell where the thorns sprang up and choked it there was religion but worldliness killed it. In the next, it

fell where there was not much depth of earth. And the Master tells us that there are some who hear the Word and with joy receive it. But when persecution comes by-and-by, they are offended, for there was never a deep work in their inner spirit.

Tremble, my Hearers, so many of you as have received the Word with joy and gladness, lest you should be found to have had no depth of earth and so, by-and-by, the good things which have blossomed and budded in you should perish before the burning sun of persecution.

Nor are these parables so few. I might occupy much of your time by recalling them. But let me remind you that Christ Himself is compared by Malachi to a refiner. He shall purify the sons of Levi. He shall be like a refiners fire and like a fullers soap. Now, of the mass that is put into the refining furnace, how little comes out pure gold or silver? All those who have to deal with metals will tell you that the ore and the slag make up, by far, the greater part, and that if they get but a small percentage, they are well rewarded for all their toil and trouble.

The Master says He will bring a third part through the fire, and happy should it be for us, if we are not found among the two-thirds that shall be put away like dross. You will remember, too, that Christ compares Himself to a farmer winnowing his corn. Whose fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor and gather His wheat into the garner. But He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Ask the farmer whether the chaff does not make a very considerable part of the unwinnowed mass, and whether it is not most intimately connected with the wheat.

A large heap, it lies upon the floorwait till the fan has been used and diligently applied and you shall see the heap diminished by handfuls, for the chaff has fled, and now only the good grain is left. All these metaphors, and many more, go to warn us that there are many professors who are deceivedmany that are in Israel, who are not of Israel. Many that are mingled with us, who, like the mixed multitude which came up out of Egypt with Moses, shall never enter into the promised land, but shall leave their carcasses to perish in the wilderness.

But, dear Friends, we are not left to inferences, for Holy Scripture gives us facts. Let me recall them to your recollection. Among the Apostles themselves, chosen by Christ, having Christ for their teacher and exemplar, there was a Judas. I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil. Were it very reasonable to suppose that our modern Churches have a smaller proportion than this of devilish deceivers? If even among Apostles, one in twelve is a liar, deceiving, and being deceived, O Lord, how should Your people search and try themselves, lest they be found wanting at the last!

Remember, too, that in the early Church, within a few days after the Spirit of God had been poured out, when that Church was in the overflowing joy of her espousals, there were found two at least who were false to their profession. Ananias and Sapphira lied unto the Holy Spirit, and fell dead before the rebuke of Peter. If, with the Spirit just poured out, there were spots in their solemn feasts. If in the first glory of the Churchs sky there were wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness and darkness forever, how much more in these days of the Churchs weakness, when we have need enough to cry, Descend, O sacred fire, descend again. For without You Your Church shall die?

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles also informs us of an instance of a wonderful success in the city of Samaria. And yet even here, among the early converts of this revival, there was found an arch-impostor. Philip the Evangelist preaches in Samaria and it is written, Then Simon Magus believed also. But you know how false he was. For Peter said, Your money perish with you, because you have thought that the Holy Spirit can be purchased with money. I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

Well, if in one of the earliest of revivals, when converts were numerous, when miracles abounded, when the whole city was full of joywe still find a Simon Maguswhat must we expect now? And, Brethren, I scarcely need to remind you, that with Paul as an overseer of the Church, the cases of deception and apostasy were not few. All they which are in Asia are turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. Demas has forsaken me. Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil.

Hymenaeus and Alexander having made shipwreck of faith, the Apostle says, Whom I have delivered unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. Philetus is mentioned, Who has strayed according to the truth.

I say, there were even in such Churches as the Galatiansmen who were accursed because they preached another Gospel. And in the Church of Corinth there were found evil ones who had to be cast out of the assembly. Moreover, Brethren, you will remember that the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, gives no flattering character of the seven Churches in Asia, though they were like seven golden candlesticks.

Of the best of them He might say, I have somewhat against you. Of Sardis it is said, You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments. And of Laodicea, you will remember it was, neither cold nor hot, so that Christ did spew it out of His mouth. Put these things together, and you will see they make up a mass of hypocrisy and deception in the most favorable age of the Churchs history. And we therefore think ourselves far from an uncharitable judgment when we expect to find in the Church of today many that are deceived. But, friends, I need not argue thus. For we know that there are such, and know it to our shame.

Every now and then a cedar falls in our midst. Howl fir trees, when the cedars fall. We have seenwho has not, that has had any experience in the religious world?we have seen our leaders turn their backs in the day of battle. And our teachers fail to sustain their own character. Ah, and we have the painful conviction that there are others who are not discovered yet, whose sins do not go beforehand unto judgment but follow after, who are nevertheless tainted at the core. There are the many covetous professors who are as grasping and as grinding as if they never professed to be Christians.

And you know that covetousness is idolatry. There are the many timeserving Christians who hold with the world and with Christ, too. And you know that we cannot serve two masters. There are the many secret sinners among Christians who have their petty vices which come not under human observation, and who, because they are thought to be good, write themselves down among the godly. Now we know there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and woe to them when their secret sins shall be published on the housetops!

Then we have the legal professors who trust to their own works, and shall find that the curse of Sinai shall wither them. And what more shall I say? Have we not many who are not so inconsistent that we could put our finger upon any open sin sufficient to deserve excommunication, but who are guilty of enormous spiritual wickedness? They are dead, they bring forth no fruit. Their hearts are hard as a millstone with regard to the conversion of sinners.

They have not the faith of Gods elect. They do not live by faith. They have not the spirit of Christ, and therefore they are none of His. God knows we have sought to use all care and diligence in this Church, both to keep out unworthy persons, and to cast out unhallowed livers. But, despite all that, we cannot but be conscious, and we tell it to you faithfully, that the enemy still continues to sow tares among the wheat. The gold is mixed with the dross, and the wine with waterfor evil men thrust themselves into the heritage of the Lord.

When our muster-roll shall be revised at last, how many out of our more than two thousand members will be found to be base-born pretenders unto godliness! O my Brethren, I implore you by the precious blood of Christ, which was not shed to make you hypocrites, but shed that a sincere people might show forth His praiseI beseech you, search and look, lest at the last it be said of youMene, Mene Tekel, you are weighed in the balances and found wanting.

II. We shall now turn to a second point. IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT THERE ARE FALSE PROFESSORS.   
There is an imitation of the externals of godliness which is not easy to detect. Art can carve a statue so that it almost breathes. And some of us, in looking at very skillful paintings, have mistaken them for realities. In a notable picture in the Exhibition, you will have noticed an imitation of sunlight shining under a door so well painted that many go up to it to ascertain if it is not really a gleam from the sun. We know that men can counterfeit coins and notes so well that only the most experienced can detect them.   
And in all commercial transactions men are so well aware of the subtlety of their fellows, that they look well lest they are deceived. The vital mysteries of godliness are mysteriousthe inner life cannot be perceived by the carnal eye, and the outer life of the godly seems to most men to be but morality carried out with care. And therefore it becomes but a very simple task for a man to make himself look just like a Christian, so as to deceive the very elect. To learn by heart that which others say from the heartto get the outline of a Believers experience and then to adapt it skillfully to ones self as our experiencethis is a thing so simple that instead of wondering that there are hypocrites, I often marvel that there are not ten times more!   
And then, again, the Gracesthe real Graces withineven they are very easy to counterfeit. There is a repentance that needs to be repented ofand yet it approaches as near as possible to true repentance. Does repentance make men hate sin? They who have a false repentance may detest some crimes. Does repentance make men resolve that they will not sin? So will this false repentance. For Balaam said, If Barak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I will not go beyond the word of the Lord.

Does true repentance make men humble themselves? So does false repentance. For Ahab humbled himself before God, and yet he perished. There is a line of distinction so fine that an eagles eye has not seen it, and only God Himself, and the soul which is enlightened with His Spirit, can tell whether this repentance is genuine or not. And as for faith, how easy it is to counterfeit this! Even in Christs day there was a faith which worked miracles, but did not save the soul. And Paul tells us that if we had a faith which could remove mountains, yet if we had not charity, it would profit us nothing.   
I know it, that a man may say that he is saved by faith without works. And his faith may give him comfort, his faith help him in trials, it may make him forsake some sins, and yet it may not be the faith which looks alone to Christ and so saves the soul. To imitate these things, to so cunning and well-practiced a counterfeiter as Satan, is no great difficulty.   
Dear Friends, let us remember, too, that there are so many things which help a man to deceive himself. He himself is naturally disposed to be very partial. Let well enough alone, is a proverb which most men have learned. Very few men care to look at the worst of their own state. They would rather say, Peace, peace, than think too harshly of themselves. What man ever gave himself a bad character? Or if he did, what man could not abundantly excuse himself for having such a character?   
Then there is the devil who never wants us to be too careful, for heedlessness is one of the nets in which he takes his prey. He will whisper in the ear, It is all well, and so beguile the simple soul to its sure ruin. Beside that, there are the inconsistencies of true Christians. Self and Satan will always use these. Why, you are as good as old So-and-So. Or, David sinned, therefore you may be a saint and sin. Lot fell, therefore you may fall and be a saint. And so, what with the flesh, what with the sins of true Christians, and what with the devil, it is easy for a man to fall asleep in carnal security, dreaming about Heaven, and never having his dream broken till he lifts up his eyes in Hell.   
Beloved, I must add to this point, that I marvel not that so many are deceived, when I see the careless way in which you deal with religion. When men have to do with their estates, they are very carefulthey retain a lawyer to go back over the title-deeds perhaps for two or three hundred years. In trade they will hurry here and there to attend to their commercial engagements. They would not launch into speculations, nor would they run great risks.   
But the soul, the poor soulhow men play with it as a toy and despise it as if it were worthless earth! Two or three minutes in the morning, when they first roll out of bed. Two or three odd minutes in the evening, when they are nearly asleepthe ends of the day given to their soulsand all the best part given to the body! And then, the Sunday! How carelessly spent by most people! With what indifference do you lend your ears too often to the preaching of the Word! It is an old song. You have heard it so many times. Heaven has become a trifle to you. Hell is almost a jest. Eternity a notion, and death but a bugbear.   
Alas, alas! It is a marvel that there are not more deceived. The wonder is that any find the gatethat any discover eternal lifewhen we are so, so mad, so foolish, so insane, as to trifle where we ought to be awfully in earnest, and to play and toy where the whole heart is all too little to be given to a work of such dread, such everlasting importance! God help us, since it is so easy to be deceived, to search and watch, and look and test, that we are not found castaways at the last!   
III. But now for a third point and that is a very solemn one, namely, that THIS DELUSION MAY CONTINUE THROUGHOUT LIFE, even to the very last moment. And probably the first minutes of our life in the next world may be tinctured with the same delusion.   
Strange to think so, and yet some Scriptures seem to hint as much. Let me tell you one or two parables which Christ has used, which prove that this delusion may last long. There are the Tares and the WheatLet both grow together until the harvest. It appears that the time of division does not arrive until the reapers, who are the angels, gather together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn. So,   
you see, you may stand in a professing state through your whole threescore years and ten, and you may be carried to your grave, followed by a train of devout men, who make great lamentation over you.   
And yet, though laid in the grave like a sheep, the worm may devour you, and you may wake in the morning to shame and everlasting contempt. The separation may never occur, so far as the Church on earth is concerned. It may go on till the angelic revisers shall correct the list and cut you off who are not of God.   
Another parablethe Draw Net repeats the same warning, The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net that is cast into the sea and gathers of every kind. When does the division come? Not till they have drawn the net to land. Then they put the good into vessels, and throw the bad away. So not till the land comesthat is, till eternity has begun, shall be the great division. And some of you may remain in the net of the Church till it is pulled ashore at the Day of Judgment, and we may some of us be expecting to find you in the vesselsand yet you will be thrown away. Or we may expect ourselves to be there and yet ourselves may be thrown away.   
I refer you again to another parable, where the same Truth of God is taught but, perhaps, even more forcibly. A great king made a supper, and it is said, When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he said unto him, Friend, how came you in here? Here was a man who remained in the kingdom, that is in the visible Churchtill the king came in to see the gueststhat is until Christ comes to judge the quick and dead. Then was he cast out, but not till then.   
Many postpone all trial of themselves as to their possession of the righteousness of Christ to the last moment. No, some manage to defer it, with all the miserable discoveries which it brings, until the grave is past, and the great assize is held, but further the lie cannot be playedfurther the examination cannot be deferred. When Jesus comes, it will be impossible for any to remain ignorant of their true state, for that day will pour a flood of light into the dark corners of the dark hearts and reveal the most secret of all secret things.   
Solemn reflection! Solemn reflection for every man and woman here who has made a profession of godliness! You may he sitting at the table, and you may continue to sit there without any of your fellow guests taking any exception to you. But when the King comes in, whose eyes can read the secrets of all hearts, He will say, How came you in here, not having on a wedding garment? Then will your nakedness and defilement startle you from your fancied security!   
Speechless confusion shall cover you. Your heart shall find no excuse, the sentence shall bear justice on its forefront. Bind him hand and foot. Let resistance and escape be made impossible. Cast him into outer darkness, for he shunned the light. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teethfit doom   
for one who would not weep nor search his soul.   
Sundry other parables utter same warning notes, but I shall quote only one more and that is, the Unprofitable Servant. He was a servant, and remained so. And he had the impudence to present himself among the other servants to receive the reward. Yes, and when he had no reward, he had the impertinence to argue with his Master and to claim that he had done his best with his Lords money. You may have a talentand, oh, how many of you havewhich you are burying in the earth.   
And you may never be upbraided by your fellow servants. But when He comes, you may, with brazen face, go up to ask for your reward but He shall say, Take the unprofitable servant! And you know what the doom of such must be. Therefore, from Christs own language, we have the most satisfactory and solemn cause to believe that the delusion of many may continue even to the last. The blindness of the self-deceiver may continue until he finds himself in the tenfold night of eternal perdition.  
But we need not go to Scripture for a proof of this, for we know that it is so ourselves. We have not an exact way of testing mens statesit were foolish to pretend to infallibilitybut there are times when one can form a very accurate guess, the door of mans heart now and then stands on the jar. Deathbeds tell tales. It is not every man who has the hardihood to dance with death, and wear a mask upon the brink of the grave. Ah, how many there are who go through the first and the second gate, but they cannot open the iron gate that leads into the City.   
I have seen some that could brave it out when in life, who have made a sorry figure in the article of death. It is a gloomy thing to hear a high professor, after all his boastings, compelled to condemn himself out of his own mouthI have been a hypocrite, I have sat at the Lords Table, and I have drunk the cup of devils, too. I was respected, when I was not respectable. I was accepted among Saints, when I was a foul villain the whole while.   
Some men have had to hang in chains before their execution. Some wretches lift up their eyes before they are actually in torment. But there have been others, more stolid still, who have gone right through the iron gate, with perfect quietness and calmness. And when we have heard their friends say, Oh, he died such an easy death! we have remembered that passage concerning the wicked, There are no bands in their deathbut their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men.   
This is the mark of the wicked, not of the righteous. O that sullen quietude, that dead calm, in which some men float into another world! How wretched that awful peace which heralds the overwhelming tempest and hurricane! Have I not watched the spirits of unregenerate professors, and seen the ghastly horror of the dread suspense which they labored to conceal. Not that their lives were inconsistent, but they had no spiritual life no care for souls, no love for Christ, no private prayer, no secret fellowship with Him. And now, at last, they have no triumph, and no comfort of the Spirit.

When their time has come to die, they have talked as glibly as any, and they have closed their eyes as peacefully as any, but, like Dives, In Hell they have lifted up their eyes, being in torment, and found their delusion dissipated, when, alas, it was too late. I warn you, dear Hearers, that delusion may continue for even fifty, sixty, or seventy years. You may say, It is all well with my soul, and have neither doubt nor fear the whole time and yet you may turn out rotten at the last.   
The glorious Dreamer has sketched the end of the false professor. I quote his words, that you may see the scene before your eyes. Now while I was gazing upon all these things, I turned my head to look back and saw Ignorance come up to the riverside. But he soon got over, and that without that difficulty which the other two men met with. For it happened that there was then in that place, one Vainhope, a ferryman, that with his boat helped him over. So he, as the others I saw, did ascend the hill, to come up to the gate, only he came alone. Neither did any men meet him with the least encouragement.   
When he was come up to the gate, he looked up to the writing that was above, and then began to knock, supposing that entrance should have been quickly administered to him. But he was asked by the men that looked over the top of the gate, Where did you come from? And what do you want? He answered. I have eaten and drank in the presence of the King, and He has taught in our streets. Then they asked him for his certificate, that they might go in and show it to the King. So he fumbled in his bosom for one and found none.   
Then said they, Have you none? But the man answered never a word. So they told the King, but He would not come down to see him but commanded the two Shining Ones that conducted Christian and Hopeful to the city, to go out and take Ignorance and bind him hand and foot and take him away. Then they took him up and carried him through the air to the door that I saw in the side of the hill and put him in there. Then I saw that there was a way to Hell, even from the gates of Heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction.   
IV. The next point is thisthat this delusion, even to the last, MAY SEEM TO HAVE THE MOST EXCELLENT ARGUMENTS TO SUPPORT IT. I shall prove this from Scripture. A man may be a deceiver, and he may accomplish his task all the more readily because he can say, I have made, and I have maintained a very respectable profession in the Church. I do not know that I have ever tarnished my character. I believe I am looked upon by most people as a pattern and example.   
Yes, this may be all correct, and yet you may be shut out at the last. Remember that the five foolish virgins were virgins. They had not forfeited the chastity of their character, but were of such good repute as to have virtuous companions, and to have allowance to meet the honored bridegroom. They had lamps. Mark that. I do not find that they threw them away. Those lamps were burning, too, for a long time. And they had some oil, mark, or else the lamps could not have burned so long.   
But they had not the oil in the vessel, though they had the oil in the lamp. Here was the fatal blunder. So the man may say, Well, I am all right. The lamp burns. Does it not burn as well as yours? You, you say have other oil in your vessel. That does not matter. I have as much oil in my lamp as you. Mine shines as brightly. I am careful with it. And if I sleep, you sleep tooso that I have as decent a profession as you have. And yet, for all this, God may at the last rend you in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver you. How often is the candle of the wicked put out, and his beauty utterly consumed.   
Again, some may bring a very careful outward observance of religion as an excellent argument, and think the conclusion to be drawn is very satisfactory. Lord, we have eaten and drank in Your presence and You have preached in our streets. You have been baptized. You are always at the Lords Table. Your pew always sees you in it whenever the doors are opened. All this is very proper and right. But it may all help to make you more easily deceived. You may conclude that you must be right because of this. And yet, the Master may say, I never knew you.   
If means of Divine Grace could raise men to Heaven, Capernaum would not have been cast down to Hell. If attendance at the temple could save the soul, then Caiaphas would be in Glory. If hearing the Word would be enough, then Herod would be in Heaven. O Brethren, more than this you must have, or you will miss everlasting life! Further, you may even go the length of manifesting much religious activity, and you may conclude from this that it must be all right with youas those did who said, In Your name we have done many wonderful works.   
We may have been preachers and have converted our hundreds and attracted our thousands. We may have been Sunday school teachers and led our little ones to Christ. We may have been missionaries, whose names have been applauded at the public meeting. But, for all that, we may be found castaways at the last. For it is not the doing of mighty works, but vital union with Christ by real faith, which shall be the pointthat shall decide the question.

O Friends, your preaching, praying, almsgiving, tract distributing unless Divine Grace is in youonly help you in your delusion, and make it the more difficult to arouse you from it. The more diligent in service the self-deceiver becomes, the more strong is the net in which his foot is taken. Every duty performed may be but another fetter to bind our souls if we are graceless professors. O that I could awaken you, you desperately bewitched and stupefied deceivers!

Dear Friends, even the righteousness of God may furnish us with a plea if we choose our own delusions, and from every holy thing we may fetch apologies. We may say, Religion is very hard. God is very strict and severe. Nobody can carry it out as he should. Therefore it will be well with me. Just as he said, Lord, I knew that you were an austere man, gathering where you had not scattered seed, and reaping where you had not sown. And so, knowing that we are not what we should be, we may keep up our delusion by the excuse that there are very few who are, and that God is a hard master.

And so we may go on, keeping our eyes fast shut, till the flames of Hell shall wake us up to sleep and dream no more. I know some who will even make it an excuse that they did not know what religion required of them, and they will plead ignorance. It is true, they will say, I have not done as I should, but I did not know about it. Just as they did on the left hand. When saw we You hungry and fed You not, or thirsty, and gave You no drink? I did not know, says the man, that Christ was on earth. I knew there was a parcel of poor people about that many despised and called fanatics. I did not suppose that feeding them would have been feeding Christ. I did not know Christ.

No, says Christ, and I do not know you. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity, for I never knew you. Ah, Beloved, if you will be deceived, it is the easiest task in the world to accomplish your purpose. Any fool can delude himself. It needs no wise, and persevering, and patient man to invent a method by which to drag his soul into a damnable delusion. This can be done by sitting still. If you would be saved, you must strive to enter in at the narrow gate. But if you would be damned, there is no striving wanted. It is only a little matter of neglect, and the whole is done. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?

V. And now to the last pointthis delusion may last through life and be sustained by many specious arguments but IT MUST ALL BE DISPELLED. Ah, if this pretty dreaming could last foreverif the man could have hope foreverthen I need not be earnest with you this morning. But since it must be dispelled, hear me! Hear me, Men and Brethren, while briefly I utter a few solemn warnings!

Remember, Professor, you will then be all alone. There will be no minister to comfort youno deacons and Church members to say you have maintained a good profession. You will have then to look at your own acts, your own faith, and your own life, in the solemn privacy of eternity. And then you will give the right verdict, if you do not now. Then, too, your conscience will be awake. You would give a thousand worlds if you could make it sleep then, for conscience is the worm of Hell and it dies not. It is the fire that can never be quenched.

Then you will not be able to satisfy conscience with pretences, nor with promises. It will gnaw and bite and devour and vex you. The fury of its fire will consume once and for all your proud conceits, and comfortable fancies. Then, too, your mind shall be more sensitive than it is now. Now you think little of Hell or Heaven, time or eternity. But then those words will stick like daggers in you. You will feel, then, that the soul was of importanceno, that it was all-important.

You will then be made to feel those themes which now only enter your ears and are forgotten. There will be no cups in which to drown your thoughts, no theatres in which to dissipate your melancholy, no gay company in which to laugh or talk away the impressions of the Sunday. There will be no chance, then, of laughing at the minister, or pacifying your conscience about these things. But your sensitive soul, wounded in every point, shall be made to cry aloud, and never shall its cries cease, for then you shall be lost, lost, lost forever!

Then your knowledge shall increase, and you shall know what you know not now, and all you know shall only make your folly appear the more folly, because when there was hope you despised it, and when Christ was preached to you, you were content with the counterfeit, and despised the reality. But hear mehear me once again, Man! Then God shall deal with you. Now it is only my poor voice. It is only my feeble utterance that goes to your heart today, and you will forget it all. Or perhaps you do not feel it now. But when God deals with you, it will be another thing.

Oh, if I were a Baxter, I would preach my sermon out in tears and weep over you proud and high Professors that will not search and examine yourselves whether you are in the faith! But if I cannot get at you, God will. Those eyes of fire shall shed a light into the dark corners of your soul. That finger shall find out the leprous spots which now you have so well concealed. His hand shall rip open your breast, to look at your heart, and expose it to the assembled universe. As sure as God shall deal with you, so would I have you surely deal with God. Make sure work for eternity. Pull it down, pull it down, if it is built on the sand! Consume it, consume it, if it is wood, hay, stubble, and cry to God this day that you may build upon the Rock and use nothing but gold, silver and precious stones, that your building may abide the fire.

Sinners! A word to you. If the Professor, if the righteous scarcely are saved, where will you appear? Drunkard, surely you shall drink the cup of wrath! Swearer! Surely you shall have your damns and your anathemas replayed into your soul abundantly! Thief! You shall find that you have stolen your own soul! Harlot! Whoremonger! You shall find at the

last that God abhors you, and He will cast you from His Presence. I say, if even the best living of men need thus to search and try, and if many of them shall be shut out, careless Sinners, what must then, become of you?

And you timid onesyou timid Christians! I have not preached this to alarm you. Let me bid you, howeverfly to Jesus again this morning. If there is all this ado, when we come to sift and try, would it not be better for you and me to cling to the Cross again, with, Just as I am, I trust You, JesusI trust You alone. For oh, remember, none can perish that are clinging to the Cross!

But, proud Professors! The last word must still be for you. You may soar, yes, like Icarus, with wings of wax, but the higher you fly, the more terrible will be your fall. And what will become of you? Think of what has become of others like you, now in Hell! What would they give for your Sabbaths over again? What would they give to be here, that they might hear one faithful sermonthat they might repent and escape from the wrath of God? Think, while you are here, how they are cursing themselves to think that they threw away the golden hour and lost the opportunity! How they gnaw their tongues, while they say, I came from the table of God to the place of fiends. I came from the pulpit into Hell. I descended from Mount Zion to the very depths of Hades. I was brought from Jerusalem to Tophet.

And this is to be your lot, proud Professor! Unless you repent. What do you say, Man? Are you willing to make your bed in Hell, after having talked of leaning your head on Jesus bosom? What? Will you dwell with everlasting burnings, after having sung of everlasting love? What? Must you be driven from His Presence, when you have boasted of being justified by His righteousness, and washed in His blood? It must be so, Professor. It must be so, unless God helps you to make true work, and real work, and sure work of it by the Holy Spirit.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. For he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.

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GREAT CHANGES   
NO. 2934

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 4, 1905.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, IN THE YEAR 1862.

**And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.   
Luke 13:30.**

IN some of the books printed in the olden times, the authors were known to put a hand in the margin, as if to point out some passage to which they would have particular attention directed. Now, wherever we see in Holy Scripture the word, behold, it answers the same end. It is intended to show us that there is either something new, something impressive, or something which is speedily to transpire and, therefore, needs immediate attention. Or else there is usually something contrary to what men expect and, therefore, their consideration is the more earnestly directed to it. Seeing this, behold, in the margin, a signpost as it werea directory for us to stop and pause and learnlet us do so tonight and may the Spirit of God be our Instructor, that we may listen to profit.

There are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. Similar passages occur in Matthew and Mark as well as in Luke. In Matthew, the connection in which it stands shows that there Christ intended it to relate to temporal circumstances. Peter had told him that he, together with his fellow Apostles, had left all that he had to follow Christ. And his Master informed him that he should be no loser by it, but rather, he should greatly profit through having left house and lands, and children and wife for Christs names sake and the Gospels. For, said Christ, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. Brothers and Sisters, let us then hear and understand this, that circumstances shall very soon be altered. The high and mighty shall not always be so elevated! The base and mean shall not always occupy such a humiliating position! Throughout the whole history of the world, sin has been striding in high places with shoes of iron and brass, while godliness has walked barefoot through the valley.

Multitudes of most ungodly men have worn the tiara and have thrown the purple about their shoulders while a far more than equal number of the virtuous have been slaves to tug the galley oar, or have been condemned to long imprisonments, or have wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. Still, Dives wears the scarlet and fine linen and fares sumptuously every day, while Lazarus lies at his gate full of sores and the dogs give him the charity of their tongues. Still Nero is on the throne and Paul rots in the Mamertine dungeon. Still a Charles II shall have the crown while the Puritan shall be found despised and rejected of men. You can scarcely turn to any page of history in which you do not see the wicked in great power, spreading himself like a green bay tree, while the righteous is plagued all daylong and chastened every morning!

Well, the time is coming when all this shall be changed! One wave of your hand, O Death, and where is the dignity of sin? One blast of Your breath, O God, and where are the glories of the mighty? Where are the pomp and the power of the ungodly man who vexed Your saints? See there, Dives has gone down to the nethermost pit and Lazarus is lifted to the Throne of God! See there, Nero rots and is corrupt, while Paul, on angels wings, is borne to the right hand of the Majesty on high! Povertystricken, having hardly a place where he can lay his head, the humble tentmaker took rank with the very lowest, but, though last, he now stands first, nearest the eternal Throne of God

*Midst the bright ones, doubly bright.*

Proud, having all the earth at his beck, Romes legions at his call, Nero reigned and thought himself a god, but now the meanest slave is greater than he and they mock and jeer him, even they, the princes who lost their thrones by him and the men whom he trampled in the dust! In Hell they greet him with the cry, Are you become like one of us? and marvel greatly because the mighty are fallen and the proud are stained in the mire! Patience, then, patience, you who are the sons of poverty and yet the sons of God! Hush your boasting, you that are the heirs of wrath and yet the heirs of fortunethe tables shall soon turneternity shall undo the incongruities of life! Time, your inequalities shall all be forgotten, Justice shall right every wrong, the first shall be last, and the last shall be first.

So, Brothers and Sisters, to pass on, there is no doubt that this is equally true with regard to the worlds esteem. For many a long year the precious sons of God, comparable to fine gold, have been esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter. For the first three centuries there was no villainy too vile to be laid at the door of the Christians. They were baser than the greatest miscreants. The world hooted them from the streets! No terms were thought bad enough for them. It is not fit that they should live, was the worlds verdict upon the followers of the Crucified. And even today a godly man is held in no reputation. There are no racks, tis trueno prisons, no finesbut there are the jeers and the mockery, the shrugging of the shoulder, the reviling, the shame and the spitting! These have not ceased even now. Genius, intellect, science, taste, poetry and literature have their golden shrines. Godliness it just tolerated in its own conventicle.

I may be addressing some Christians, especially some young converts who feel it very hard to have the cold shoulder in society, to be neglected by their friends, to be threatened by their parents, to be forsaken by all who once counted them to be good. Yes, patience, patience, patience! You that are the last for Christ shall be the first with Christ by-and-by! Those that are first today in honor and think themselves great and famous because they will never yield to fanaticism, because they will never be enthusiastic after Christthey shall be among the last! The day comes when they shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt. The organs of public sentiment will change their tone. The world that honored the ungodly shall see their shame. The eyes that once looked slightingly on saints shall be made to honor them as the noblest of the noble and they that hated Christ shall be lightly esteemed. Let those two thoughts be riveted upon our memories!

But I choose to dwell rather upon two other thoughts. The first part of my text seems to me to teach wonders of Grace. And the next part of it seems to me to teach

wonders of sin.

I. Here, surely, is A WONDER OF GRACEThere are last that shall be first.   
Here is Divine Sovereigntychoosing the last to make them first. Here is Sovereign Graceforgiving the greatest sin to make the brightest saint. Here is Almighty Power changing the most degraded, turning the current of the most strong-minded sinner and making his soul willing in the day of Gods power.   
What does it mean, those that are last? I take it, if I understand the sense aright, it means thisthere are some that are last in pedigree, born of impious parents in some low hovel, in some dingy room, an attic or a cellar, in some court where the first sound that reached their ear was blasphemy, and the first sight that greeted their eye was drunkenness. How many we have of such in London who are, indeed, last if we consider their birth! Poor things, they are born not simply to poverty, but they seem to be the nurslings of vice! Ones eyes might weep tears of blood when we think how unhappily some children are placed in the very first moment of their advent into society. Glory be to God, however, there are some of these that shall be first! God will find His jewels in the dens, alleys and slums of Londonand take up to His Eternal Throne those that were the sons of harlots and the children of the thiefthat they may sing forever of His amazing Grace!   
Last, too, they are in education. Turned out into the street to pick up from every boy the vice he has acquired, to learn from evil men, villainy of which their young hearts would not have dreamed. If you should go into our Ragged Schools, especially some in the very lowest neighborhoods, or if you would hear Mr. Gregory, the missionary in St. Giless, tell his tale of all the sin he sees and the education that our young men of St. Giless get, O gentlemen of St. Jamess, it might well make you blushblush with shame that you are not doing something for themshame for yourselves that you let your neighbors live like this! They are still your neighbors, though they are hidden behind the tall houses of your gorgeous streets and crescents, your squares and terraces! Well, these are last in education, but glory be to God, some who were trained for the gallows and tutored for the convict settlement, shall, nevertheless, be taught of the Lord and inducted into the fellowship of the saints! Irresistible Grace shall come and pluck them out of the furnace, hating the garment spotted with the flesh, yet esteeming them that they, also, may be jewels in the Redeemers crown!   
Then, again, they are last in morals. At eventide, see her as she goes out to hunt for souls. See him, too, as at eventide he reels from gin palace to gin palace to drink, to swear, to curse. Ah, we are not without those who are last in morals in this huge den of vice, this city of iniquity! Could Sodom find sinners that would match with the sinners of London? What do you think? Could Tyre and Sidon outdo the iniquities that are near our doors and may be seen in our own streets? I think not! You need not, tonight, go many steps when once the sun is down before you will see under every gaslight some that are last. Blessed be Godsome of them shall be first! Praise the Lord, you angels, there are some of them here tonight, some of them saved! Some of them snatched from the fire and they will sing in Heavenand they do sing on earth right sweetly to the praise of the love that has made the last to be the first!   
Some of these appear, beside their moral debasement, to have the last disposition that could ever be susceptible of Grace. You know the men I mean. Men that when you look into their faces, you feel you would not like to meet them on a dark night. There are such men whose very countenances betray a stolidity and hardness that is not altogether common to men. Do you remember what the Scotsman said to Rowland Hill when he looked long into his face? Rowland asked him, What are you looking there for? I was looking at the lines on your face, he said. And what do you think of me? said Rowland. Why, said the man, I was thinking that if it hadnt been for the Grace of God, you would have been one of the biggest scoundrels living. And Rowland said twas even so. He felt that himself. And I think we have all felt so. We have all felt, as one good man said, There goes John Bradford if it were not for the Grace of God. To the ale-house, to the prison, to the gallowseach of us might have come if Sovereign Grace had not prevented!   
There are men who seem naturally more coarse, more rough, more wild, more outrageous than others. They have furious passions, they have a fiendish temper. What other word could I use? They have a temper that seems to make them like very maniacs over a little provocation. They know not what to do but stamp and rave, and say they know not what! These are the last men you would think could be saved. Yes, but there are many of them that have been made first. Strange is it that God picks out the very men whom we would throw awaythe most worthless, the most hopeless, hapless and helpless. Sovereign Grace had fixed its eye upon them and said of each one of them, I will have that man. That mans will stood out stoutly and resisted to the uttermost the pleading voice of salvation, but Grace would have him! O that strong will of his, how useful it is now in the cause of Christ! That hard heart of his, now softened, seems to give a holy courage and a dauntless and a fearless manner which would be unknown to men of a different mold! There are last that shall be first.   
What inferences do we draw from all this? We draw these lessons. There is an encouragement for some of you who think you are last. I bless God there are always some of the last ones coming into the Tabernacle. God deliver us from having an exclusively respectable congregation! I like to see men of all classes. I like to see the poor come in and I like to see the base and vile come inand I know they do. I feel like Rowland Hill, when it was said to him, It is only the tag, rag, and bobtail that go to Surrey Chapel. Ah, then! he said, Welcome tag, and welcome rag, and welcome bobtailthese are just the sort we want to see come into the Chapel. Ah, I hear someone say with a sigh, that means me, that means me! I am one of those men. I am one of the last. Then there is encouragement for you! Mercys gates stand wide open and Christ invites you in! Trust Him at this very hour, for, there are last that shall be first.   
And, Brothers and Sisters, what cause for humiliation to us who are saved! Were not we the last? I am sure, when I look at that headstrong boy, when I think of that hard, stubborn boy that never did and would not yieldwhen I think of that child who could bear any measure of chastisement but never would make an apology for anythingand then think of myself saved by Grace, I marvel! How is it that God should choose such an one as I am? And I think you can all say, Why me, Lord? Why me? And you can put it down to this, There are last that shall be first.   
And what a reason this is why you and I should serve Christ, too! What? Did He look on me when I was last, and will I not work for Him? Stand out of the way, you groups of cold-hearted men! Stand out of the way, you careless professors that cannot serve your Master! I must and will do God service, for I owe Him more than you do. Mary, I implore you, by the gentleness of your spirit, stand back, stand back! I must break my alabaster box over that blessed head, for I have much forgiven and, therefore, I love much. I must do much for Him. Give me great sinners to make great saints! They are glorious raw material for Grace to work upon and when you do get them saved, they will shake the very gates of Hell! The ringleaders in Satans camp make noble sergeants in the camp of Christ! The bravest of the brave are they. God send us many such and we will sweep before us yet the hosts of evil and drive iniquity into the depths of the sea. There are last that shall be first. O dear Friends, I wish the net would catch some of the last right now. I know that young man over there thinks that Christ will never save him. There are last that shall be first. I know that young woman has written it down in her conscience that she is an odd personshe is sure to be passed overone of the last, I see. Ah, and you shall be among the first! Only believe Christ, only trust Him! He is God! He can save you! He is Man! He is willing to save you! Trust Him, His promise is given! He will save you, He will wash you from every sin and bring you with joy before His face at the last!   
II. But now I must take the second part of the text, as briefly as possible, and speak of WONDERS OF SIN. There are first that shall be last.   
First in ancestry, hushed to your slumber with a holy lullaby, candled on the knee of piety, hanging at the breast of tenderness and lovefrom your mothers arms you shall go to the frightful grasp of the Destroyer! And from a fathers rejected counsel to the sinners direst doom! There are first that shall be last. First in training, taught in the Sunday school, prayed over, wept over.

There are first that shall be last. First in privileges, sitting under a faithful ministry, warned, exhorted, entreated, pleaded with. There are first that shall be last. Having much light and knowledge, having an awakened conscience, but quenching it, having the warnings of the Spirit, but stifling them. There are first that shall be last. Regularly in the house of God, well-read in Scripture, well-trained in Doctrine, understanding the way of God, but not running in it, knowing your duty but doing it not. There are first that shall be last. O my Hearers, I speak to thousands of you that are among the first tonight! When I said there were last ones here, I glanced for the few, but oh, how many of you belong to the tribes and families of men who are of the first! You are not Sabbath-breakers, the most of youyou go to a place of worship. You are not heathensyou have a Bible, sometimes you read itand you know what faith in Christ means, if you have it not in your hearts. O London! London! London! You fair metropolis of merchandize and wealth! How are you exalted to Heaven by your privileges! Christ is now preached in the corner of every street, in your parks, in your fields! Christ is preached in your theatres. He is preached where every man can hear of Him if he will. First and foremost as you stand, O inhabitants of London, the envy of many nations and their refuge of the oppressed of all nationshow many of you shall be worse off than the savages of Africa or the cannibals of New Zealand? There are first that shall be last.

I cannot preach on this text. I have not the strength. I have not the power of thought to point out this solemn Truth of God as I gladly would and to thrust it on your consciences. I can only thus make it ring and sound in your ears by saying again, There are first that shall be last.

Remember, if it is so with youand this is the conclusion of the whole matteryour being last will involve awful responsibilities because you were first! You cannot perish as others do. If you do reject Christ, how shall you escape who neglect so great a salvation? Sirs, I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you in the Day of Judgment! Besides this, how shall you escape from the remorse of your conscience, when conscience, wide awake, shall cry, You knew your duty, but you did it not? The caverns of Hades shall say, with dull and dreary echoes, You knew your duty, but you did it not. Every revolution of eternity, as it brings some fresh crisis of your pain, shall say to you, You knew your duty, but you did it not. Banished from Heaven to Tophet, from the Temple of the Lord to Gehenna, from the voice of the minister to weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, from the song of the sanctuary to the howling of the Pitthis, this shall be the edge of the sword, this the tooth of the devouring wormYou knew your duty, but you did it not!

O you first ones, God help you! If you ever should be last, how terrible will be your doom! Let us then engage in great searching of our hearts tonight. I search my own soul nowwhat if I, standing first in Gospel privileges, the teacher of this peoplewhat if I be among the last? My Brothers, you the elders and deacons of this Church, the first in our Israelwhat if you are among the last? You young men and women of our Catechumen classes, of our Bible classesyou young men of our College, first, most hopeful of allwhat if you are found among the last? You Sunday school teachers and superintendents, you who teach young children the way to Heavenwhat if you learn not the way to Heaven yourselves? What if you, the first, should be the last? You, the Beloved of my soul, whom these hands have baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ! You with whom we have had sweet communion at the blessed feast of the Lords Tablewhat if you, the first, should be among the last? I can but reiterate the cry. I can but stand here, like Jonah, and cry aloud with one unvarying note of warning, Take heed, you first, that you are not among the last! And what shall we all say, rolling the two sentences into one? O Grace, make me among the first! Let me not be among the last at the last! O God, help me now to escape from Hell and fly to Heaven! I do accept Christ as my Savior

*Nothing in my hands I bring,   
Simply to His Cross I cling.*   
Say that in your souls after me, you who feel it

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

Trust the Master now, my Hearers. Say in your spirits, Yes, were guilty and vile! Save us, Lord, or we perish. Let the cry of your repentance and the utterance of your faith go up to Heaven in one sound! And then God commissions us to say to you, from His Word, that He absolves you from the guilt of all your sin when you have believed in Jesus Christ His Son. He that believes on the Son has everlasting life and shall never perish! He shall never come into condemnation, but the love of God shall rest on him in time and eternity. God grant it to us all, for His names sake!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 51; 142.**

Psalm 51: This Psalm is dedicated to the chief musicianit was intended to be sung. Yet it is not by any means a joyous piece of music. It seems more fit to be sungor sighedas a solo for the solitary penitence of a broken heart than for the united songs of Believers. Yet, in Gods ears it is clear that the voice of penitence is full of music, for this penitential Psalm is dedicated to the chief musician.

Verse 1. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness. No eye can spy out the tender attributes of God like an eye that is sore with weeping on account of acknowledged sin, so David prays, Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving-kindness. This word, loving-kindness, is a rich double word and it was specially suitable just then, for he who has a broken heartbruised and broken on account of sin, needs double mercy from God.

1. According unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions. They are on record and I cannot erase the terrible lines, nor can You erase them, O Lord, without displaying a multitude of Your tender mercies. It will need Omnipotence, itself, to get rid of this sin engraved in brass. Therefore, according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.

2. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity. Wash me through and through, O Lord. Wash me thoroughly! A hypocrite is satisfied with the washing of his garments, but the true penitent cries, Wash me! Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity. It is almost the only thing that I can really call my own and it is most sadly mine. O Lord, wash my iniquity right away!

2. And cleanse me from my sin. If washing will not suffice, put me in the fire, but somehow, somehow, O Lord, cleanse me from my sin! You notice that Davids prayer is not concerning the punishment of his sin, but concerning the sin itself. That is the one thing which is eating into his heartlook how many words he uses to describe itMy sin, my iniquity, my transgressions. He cries to God to help him to get rid of that which is the source of all his sorrow. The thief dreads the gallows, but the penitent fears not the punishment of his sinit is the sin, itself, that terrifies him!

3. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is always before me. I cannot get away from it and I cannot get rid of it. It stares me in the face. It haunts me in my lying down and my rising up. I am obliged to acknowledge my sin, for it is always before me.

4. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight. It is true that I have grieved others and that I have done much injury to others by my sin, but in all this, I have sinned most against You. The virusthe essence of my sin is that it has been committed against You, O my God!

4. That You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge. My sin was committed within Your jurisdiction and against Your Law, O Lord and, therefore, as I am summoned to appear at Your court, I cannot disobey the summons. I am compelled to give an answer to the charge brought against meand my answer is that I am guilty, without any extenuating circumstances that I can plead before You, O Lord! I am guilty through and through.

5. Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. David does not say that by way of making an excuse for himself, but rather to aggravate his own guilt. He admits that his guiltiness is really a part of himself. He does not say, Lord, I was acting contrary to my nature when I committed this sin. You know that it was not like me to do that. Oh, no! He says, Lord, You know that I was acting quite in accordance with my nature. It was just like me to fall into this terrible sin. We have sometimes heard people say that they were surprised to find that they had been guilty of certain sinslet it not be so with you, but rather be surprised to find yourself kept from guilt, amazed when you are preserved from sinfor the whole tendency of unrenewed human nature is towards iniquity. In sin did my mother conceive me.

6. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. As much as to say, Lord, that which You desire to see in me is not there, and though You have made me also to desire it, yet I fear that I have not at present gone beyond the desire, for still within me, in my secret soul, there lies a tendency to evil, and unless I keep a strict watch over myself, I soon go astray. Lord, make me inwardly clean! I cannot bear that it should be otherwise with me.

7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. As the priest purges the unclean man by dipping the bunch of hyssop into the blood of the sacrifice, and then sprinkling him with it, so, purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.

7. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. That is to say, I shall be clean if You do wash me, O Lord! My own washing makes me no cleaner. My own cleaning make me fouler than I was before, but if You will purge me and if You will do it with the sacrificial blood, then I shall be whiter than snow. This is grand faith on Davids part! I cannot help calling your attention to itthat he, with a sense of his sin heavy upon him and bowed down to the very earth with the consciousness of his great guilt, yet dares to say, Wash meadulterous, murderous Davidwash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. No faith brings greater Glory to God than the faith of the audaciously guilty when they dare to believe that God can forgive them! Not even the unfallen seraphim can render to God purer homage than when you, a defiled and condemned sinner, dare to believe in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus and so believe as to say, with David, Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. If a good man ever goes astray, he may depend upon it that his sin will be very costly to him. And the better a man is, the more expensive will his sin be to him in the long run. God breaks the very bones of His children when He chastens them for their sin. I do not doubt that many a time their pilgrim way has been all the more weary in their later days by reason of their sins in their earlier days. There is many a pain that shoots through old bones, that is meant to remind the old bones what they were when they were young. God will certainly chasten us for our iniquities if we are His own people.

9. Hide Your face from my sins, Lord, do not look at them. Refuse to see them! Hide Your face, not from me, but from my sins.   
9. And blot out all my iniquities. See how he comes back to that note again and again? He is never far away from it. There are certain tunes in which one note is constantly repeated, so is it here. David prays, O God, put away my sin, blot out my sin, forgive my sin. He cries for nothing else but thatHide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. He longs for the time when not one of them shall be in existence!   
10, 11. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. These are the groans of a true child of God. Never has a man, without the Spirit of God within him, prayed to God in this fashion. David, therefore, notwithstanding all his sin, still had the life of God within his soul and when Nathan came to reprove him, the sacred fire began to burn again. Here are some of the sparks of itand some of the smoke of it, too Cast me not away from Your Presence   
*Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord.* Say not, I can no longer use you. You shall no longer stand in My courts, for you have disgraced Me. Get away from My Presence. Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.   
12. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit. David longs for his Lord to come back to him. When God flogs His children, they still cling to Him and they cry to Him. They do not wish to run away and hide themselves from Him. No, their only comfort is to weep upon their Fathers bosom and to wait for the kiss of forgiveness from His lips. So David prays, Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit.   
13. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted to You. Do you not see, Brothers and Sisters, that we must be in a right state of heart if we are to serve God well? We cannot teach transgressors His way with a confident hope that they will be converted to Him unless we, ourselves, possess the joy of Gods salvation and are upheld by His Holy Spirit! If we go to Gods work out of order, we shall make a mess of it and accomplish nothing that is really worth doing. But when God gives us His comforting Grace within and His upholding on every hand, then shall we teach with power and sinners shall learn to profitThen will I teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.   
14. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. None sing so loudly the praises of Redeeming Grace as those who have been forgiven great sins. There is no music, outside Heaven, that has such a volume of Godglorifying praise in it as the song of the man who loves much because he has had much forgivenMy tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.   
15. O Lord, open You my lips. He felt as if he could not be trusted to open his own lips and, certainly, he was not to be trusted to open his own eyes, for when he had opened them before, he had looked on that which led him into sin. So now he would have God to keep his very lips, that he shall never speak again except as he shall be guided from on highO Lord, open You my lips.   
15, 16. And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it. Very naturally Davids mind began to think of the multitudes of bulls, lambs and rams that were burnt upon Jehovahs altar. There is nothing that makes a man so spiritual and so Evangelical as a deep sense of sin. You cannot be a Sacramentarian and a ceremonialist very long if you have a broken heart. Those pretty toys do very well for the kind of miserable sinners who do not know what either misery or sin means! But he who really has had his heart broken on account of the guilt of his sin cannot be content with the mere outward sacrificehe must have that which is spiritualYou desire not sacrifice; else would I give it:   
16, 17. You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. David has to feel that it is better to have one genuine sigh for sin than to make ten thousand bulls shed their blood upon the sacrificial altar! And if you are truly broken from your sinif you do really hate it, and cry to God for the pardon of itif the Spirit of God has really given you complete cleansing from your guilt by the precious blood of Jesusthis is better than all the material sacrifices offered in all the temples that were ever built and overlaid with gold! The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

18. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem. As much as though David said, I have done great hurt to Zion, I have pulled down the walls of Jerusalem by my sin. Now, Lord, build them up again. Undo the mischief which Your poor foolish servant has worked by his backslidings. So may any backsliders among us pray to the Lord, Visit Your Church so graciously, Lord, that my sin may not injure her!

19. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bulls upon Your altar. Oh, yes, we are sure to bring to God the best that we have when we once get our sins forgiven! After we have looked to Christ, who is the one great Sacrifice for sin, then we bring to God all that we can, to show how grateful we are for His pardoning mercy!

Psalm 142. Maschil of David. A prayer when he was in the cave. This Maschil of David is instructive to us, for the experience of one Believer is very edifying to another. We are so much alike that as in water, face answers to face, so the heart of men answers to manand what one Believer has felt awakens sympathy in the rest of Gods people.

Psalm 142:1, 2. I cried unto the LORD with my voice: with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before Him; I showed before Him my trouble. David mentions that he prayed with his voice. This is an unimportant matter compared with praying with the heart, but when the heart is full of prayer, it is often very helpful to be able to use the voice to give expression to the emotions of the soul. To have a room in which, without disturbing others and without ostentatiously revealing your private experiences to others, you can speak aloud unto the Lord, will be found to be a great advantage in prayer. Some mens thoughts become more concentrated and flow more freelyand their hearts are better able to pour out their deepest and fullest expressions when they can pray aloud. So David says that in the cave, where he would not be likely to disturb anybody, he cried with his voice unto the LordWith my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication.

You can see from verse 2 what was the style of his prayer. I poured out my complaint. The figure is a very simple one. Just as you pour out water from a bottle, so David let his hearts complaint flow out before the Lord. In pouring out water, it sometimes comes slowly and sometimes fastat times with a rush, followed by a pause. There is no prayer better than that which naturally flows from the renewed heart without any strain or effort, it was so with DavidI poured out my complaint before Him, I showed before Him my trouble. Just as a patient shows his wounds to the surgeon, so take away the covering from your broken heart and wounded spirit and set your trouble before the Lord, who already sees it! It will be no novelty or cause of surprise to Him and He desires you to manifest such trustfulness in Him as will lead you to lay before Him your complaint and your trouble.

3. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path. My spirit was so overwhelmed within me, that I did not know where I was, or what I was. I could not make heads or tails of myself. I seemed to be like a skein of silk or wool in a tangle. My thoughts, as George Herbert would have said, were all a case of knives, sharp to cut and wound. I could not make myself out! I was a puzzle even to myself, but You knew my path even then.

3, 4. In the way wherein I walked have they privately laid a snare for me. I looked on my right hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. This is a terrible condition for anyone to be into have every friend forsake you to find that those who used to know you best, do not want to know you any longer, but turn their heads away as if it would be a disgrace to them to be known to have been your friends. This is a grand opportunity for testing the reality of your faith! Can you believe God now? Can you take Him to be your Friend now that you have not another friend in the world? Fine-weather faith is very cheap and easily obtainedbut the faith that can stand fast in the time of the storm and tempestthat hardy mountaineering faith which hides in God in the coldest winter and finds its summertime in Him alonethat is the faith that is worth having and worth keeping!

6. I cried unto You, O LORD: I said, You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. I left the broken reeds alone and leaned upon my God. I said, You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.

6, 7. Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors for they are stronger than I. 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. This is a beautiful metaphor, suggesting that when the saints heard that God brought him out of prison, they would gather round him, gaze upon him as a miracle of mercy and ask him to tell them his wonderful tale. He would be the center of their delighted observation and their own faith and hope in the Lord would be greatly increased. As a little imprisoned bird might long for emancipation, David says, O Lord, open my cage door and let me fly and I will sing, as I mount, to the praise of Him who gave me my liberty! 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.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3520 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

JERUSALEM THE GUILTY   
NO. 3520

A SERMON   
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 13, 1916.   
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.   
It cannot be that a Prophet should perish out of Jerusalem. Luke 13:33.

I CAN scarcely tell you under what singular feelings I am led to adopt this text. It has entered my mind, whispered in my ears and I might almost say, it has haunted my thoughts, for all the day long has it been fresh in my memory, and again and again it has recurred to me in the night watches. There is no comfort that I can extract from the meditation, and not much instruction that I can deduce from the oracular sentence. Conscience, however, lays on me a strong constraint. Any portion from the Word of God that comes forcibly home to my own soul, I am prone to accept, as it were, in trust for your sakes. So I aim to deliver unto you that which I also received. Be it void of comfort or charged with rebuke, God grant it may be acknowledged to your profit and accepted to His praise!

It cannot be that a Prophet should perish out of Jerusalem. Probably this was a proverb among the Jews which our Savior used and endorsed. For many years Jerusalem had been stained with the blood of Prophets. These godly men might have lived securely in the rural districts of Judah and among her various towns and hamlets, and though sometimes annoyed, never exposed to violencebut so had the seat of judgment become the throne of iniquity that vengeance was reeked where justice should have ruled! Jerusalem, the metropolis of government, the center of religion and the priests, became notorious as the scene of judicial murder and vindictive martyrdom! It had been, through a number of years, the place where one after another of Gods servants had been stoned and put to death. Our Savior seems to have felt that He was safe while in Herods jurisdiction, but that when He got to Jerusalem, He was in imminent peril from conspiratorsthat there a baptism of blood awaited Him, when His life would be sacrificed and He would become, as it were, the Prince of Martyrsan offering of the noblest life, a shedding of the richest blood that ever was poured out on the altar at Jerusalem! It seems strange that Jerusalem should have sunk so low as to monopolize the sin of murdering the Prophetsthat it should have become renowned for persecution and vindictive crueltya city within whose walls Gods servants might look in vain for shelter. Where popular feeling and the public courts were alike against them. Where summary indictment and certain conviction were sure to be their lot! Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You that stone the Prophets and kill them who are sent to you!

From generation to generation had they thus framed mischief and done violenceuntil our Lord accuses and holds them guilty of the slaughter of His servants from the blood of righteous Abel unto that of Zacharias, the son of Barachias, whom they slew between the Temple and the altar. What a fearful contrast this presents to the name that Jerusalem had received, and the position that had been assigned to her! Was she not called Jerusalem, the place of righteousness and of peace? Her bards had praised her in glowing sonnets as, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth. How did the Psalmist draw lively, lovely images of her security, surrounded by mountains that served as natural fortresses to protect her! And did he not even picture the little hills that environed her as companions of the mountain on which the Temple stood? Why leap you so, you high hills? This is the hill which God delights to dwell in. Where else did acceptable sacrifices smoke? As for the altars of the high places, they were an abomination to the Lord! The one altar at Jerusalem God had ordained for acceptable sacrifice. There the tribes came up to worship. It was the meeting place and rallying point of all the families of Israel at their annual festivals

*Unto her gates, with joys unknown   
Did Judahs tribes repair.   
The Son of David held His throne   
And sat in judgment there.*

Her mountain was illustrious in history. It was on one of her pinnacles that Abraham drew the knife to slay his son! And on the spot where the plague was stopped in Davids day when the outstretched hand of the angel was arrested at the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite, was built, stone by stone, the Temple where God delighted to dwell! It was the source from where light went streaming through the land as from the sun, and at the same time it was the great lake into which the rivers of sacred prayer and praise constantly flowed, gleaming in their fullness! Oh, Jerusalem, your very name was dear to the captives as they sat mournfully down by Babylons streams and wept, saying, one with another, If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joys. You seem so fair a city, so perfect a chrysolite! Your halls seem so truly made of agate, and your gates of carbuncle that in your glory we see a type of the abode of the saints of God

*Jerusalem, my happy home! Name ever dear to me.   
When shall my labors have an end,   
In joy, and peace, and thee?*

And has it come to this? Well, then, might the Savior, whom you did despise and reject, weep over you! Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Has it come to this? You kill the Prophets and stone them that are sent to you. Has it come to this? No marvel that your house is left unto you desolate, that the holy city is given up to the abomination of desolation, and is left to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles! Has it come to this? Oh, horror of horrors! What sorrows are too sad and heart-rending to follow at the heels of sin! Look, my Brothers and Sistersthat same sin which once cast down Lucifer from his throne, degraded him from the royalties of Heaven and doomed him to the Pit that burns with fire and brimstone foreverthat same sin has plucked this pearl from the regal diadem of the King of Kings, subjected it to the direst dishonor and made it a byword in the earth! So is her beauty spoiled! So is her sacredness and such are the wages of sin, and such the recompense of transgressions! As you think of this city of the great king converted into a place of butchery and a shamble for Prophets, I would have you recollect that

I. THE LIKE RIGHTEOUS RETRIBUTION IS STILL INFLICTED WHEREVER SIN SEEKS SHELTER UNDER THE SOLEMN SANCTIONS OF A SOUNDING PROFESSION!

Now and then we are startled. Someone who had stood foremost among the saints has all of a sudden excited public gaze, conspicuous as a fiend. I remember such a man. He preached the Gospel and seemed to preach it with intense sincerity. At any rate, there was such fervor in his manner that zeal seemed to animate his heart. His words moved many souls were converted under his ministry, souls that shall make glad the angels of God throughout eternity! He comforted the saints and many disciples were refreshed by his discourses. But in an evil hour he turned aside. His fall was precipitate. The sink was abysmal. Of drunkards he became one of the worst! Of swearers the most profane! Among licentious the most lewd! No slave of Satan was ever more in earnest to destroy himself and to do his black masters bidding than that same man who once ministered at the altar of God and appeared to be a star in the right hand of Christ! And why may not such a collapse occur to me? And why may it not occur to you, my Brother? Every man, it has well been said, has not a soul of crystal whereby other men can read his actions. You look fair. You seem to be a saint. Yet there may be a worm in the center of your fair plant after all! Sudden death often surprises those who appear to be in sound health, though slow disease has long been sapping the strength of their system. Be not deceived by appearancesmake sure of your salvation! Jerusalem killed the Prophets. Maybe you will likewise belie your pretensions to virtue. You have heard of a woman out of whom seven devils were cast. Did you never hear of one into whom seven devils entered?

There she stands. Never woman seemed more pure! Never penitent wept more sparkling tears! Like another Mary Magdalene, she washed her Saviors feet with her tears. Yes, she seems to sit at Jesus feet and love Him with all her heart. Earnest in season and out of season, we admire her. But the time of trial comesthat time which tests the metal whether it is gold or not. She gives her heart to another than her Savior. Once led astray, no lips are more defiling than hers! No feet run more swiftly in the way of the Destroyer. It happened unto her that she did in theory know the way of righteousness, but the gracefulness of her profession was not the Grace of God in truthso presently she turned aside, and she, who seemed to be a Hannah, turned out to be a Jezebel! And she who once could sing, as we thought, the grateful song of Mary, must hence forever weep a doleful Miserere! Take care, my Sister, that you are safely built upon the Rock of Ages! As Jerusalem killed the Prophets, so may you. I say so because I find it in Gods Word.

Have we not too often seen instances of those who were regular outward attendants upon Gods House who seemed to adorn the earthly courts and bid fair for Heaven? Who rejoiced continually in holy things with a full measure of assurance and rather frowned on some of the Brethren who were sometimes depressed and filled with doubt and fearshave not we seen you very Church members become the victims of some darling sin, the prey of some base lust which has driven you like bullocks to the slaughter? There is a sin unto death. Our eyes have seen the mischief! Our ears have listened to the tale! Our hearts have been pained by the recital hundreds of times! From my youth up I have felt indescribable terror when I heard of such an one who seemed to be a pillar in the Church moved from his placeDemas has forsaken me, having loved this present evil world. When I have heard of it, sometimes I have been ready to wail with the Prophet, Howl, fir tree, for the cedar has fallen. Those who seemed better than ourselves, more gracious and far more gifted, have turned asideand we have felt that it is only by a miracle of Grace we have not done the same

*So stones hang in the air   
So sparks in ocean live,   
Kept alive with death so near,   
I to God the glory give.*

Jerusalem killed the Prophets, and there is that secret wickedness in the hearts of every one of us that would have made us do the same a thousand timesthat would have turned us from saints into devils, if the constraining, preserving Grace of God had not defended us! Let us, then, humbly acknowledge all this. Let us carefully search ourselves to see whether we are in the faith and then let us gratefully bless that mighty hand which, having begun its gracious work, will not leave us until it has perfectly performed its purpose and fulfilled in us all the designs of love! Looked at thus, this passage conveys a very solemn warning. How terrible must be the deathbed of a man who, after having made a profession, and perhaps preached the Gospel, has become an apostate! Can we picture the siege of Jerusalem? I believe that all human rhetoric must fail in the description and that if a painter dipped his brush in blood, he could not sketch the horrors of that awful time! If those days had not been shortened, surely the whole race had been swept away! There never was and never shall be until the Last Tremendous Day, anything that can be paralleled with the destruction of Jerusalem under Vespasian and Titus! In like manner, there is nothing, I think, that can parallelcertainly nothing that can exceedthe horrors of the dying bed of an apostate. Did you ever read the story of Francis Spire, or of John Auld, in the days of the last nonconforming reformation in England? If you ever read the stories of these deathbeds, they will ring in your ears at night, and make you cry out, O God, if I am damned, let it not be as an apostate! If I must perish, yet let me not perish as one who, like a dog, returns to his vomit, or like a sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. Jerusalem stoned the Prophets! You young men who are just putting on your harness, boast not as though you were taking it off!

Beginners in the way of Grace, it is a great and solemn Truth of God that every child of God will hold on until the end, but it is an equally solemn Truth that many who profess to be the Lords are self-deceivers and will turn out apostates after all! They will go back to the beggarly elements from which they appear to have escaped and begin to stone the Prophets, whom once they professed to reverence and love! How dreadful their doom! To see the Lord when fire blazes before Him, and the clouds form a chariot beneath Himwhen He shall come, but not the same as once in lowliness He camewhen He shall appear in rainbow wreath and clouds of storm, how dreadful will it be to those who turned their backs upon Him! In vain shall they call upon the mountains and rocks to cover them! They must face Him whom they deserted. They must be arraigned before Him whom they treacherously betrayed. Oh, how they will fall in speechless, helpless, hopeless dismay before Him! And oh, how He will trample on them in His anger because they trampled on His blood in their treachery and crucified to themselves the Lord of Life afresh! God save us from their eternal woes, for of all bitter remorse and fell despair, theirs must be the most tormenting! The privileges they enjoyed aggravate the perdition in which they are engulfed. Down from Heavens gates they are thrust into Hell by the back door! Their faces, once towards Jerusalem the Golden, now confront the accursed Gehenna! Far from the rayless, pathless outlook with which they bid farewell to mortal life to the dire reality of their dreaded doom they are launched forth, wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Such are trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots! Such are raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame! God deliver us from their character and their conduct, lest we reap the consequence that is sure to close their career! Now to draw a fresh lesson, let me remind you of

II. THE UTTER USELESSNESS OF OUTWARD PRIVILEGES UNLESS THERE IS INWARD PURITY.   
Never was a city more richly endowed or more highly privileged than was Jerusalem of old. As we have already said, it was the city of the great king. There all the festivals were held. Her priests were her pride. The anointed ministers of the altar thronged her streets, numerous as the flowers which bedeck the meadows in spring. There you might have heard the voice of sacred song every hour in the day! Within her gates the ritual of religion was observed with almost perpetual celebrations. All that was comely, sacred and holy seemed to have an exclusive abode within her precincts. Yet for all that, these people were not a whit the better. They had a baneful monopoly that they shamefully coveteda monopoly of killing the Prophets and of stoning those whom God sent to them! The means of Grace were evidently not blessed to them.   
How plainly this shows the possibility of retaining sin, unsubdued and unchecked, notwithstanding all the righteousness that is taught in precepts, and all the Divine Grace that is exhibited in ordinances! Are there not regular attendants here who, though they mingle with the Church, join in the hymns of praise and listen to the words of exhortation, are as corrupt in their character and their conversation as if they went nowhere? Sit there not in these pews those who are as covetous, as bad tempered and, in some cases, as licentious as if they never entered a place worship at all? For them our most earnest rebukes, invitations and warnings are ineffective as the roaring of the wild waves of the sea, or the ringing of bells in a church towerthey produce no sort of moral or spiritual result! I speak solemnly of individuals, not censoriously of systems, when I affirm, without particularizing any denomination, because the same is true among ourselves! I know there are thousands who go to church and believe because they have conformed, more or less, to religious customs and observed the sacraments, all seems well with them but neither Doctrine nor discipline of Christians exert the slightest influence upon their hearts or their lives! Their temper is as fiery or as morose. Their greed for the world just as inordinate. Their vanity and fondness of display quite as unseemly and the petty vices of a degraded mind as freely indulged as if they ranked themselves among the profane! They have all the outward signs of religion, but they have not a particle of vital godliness!   
I remember a time when people wore rings round their fingers to cure their bones of rheumatism. It may have done them some good, though I doubt it! But that outward forms of religion can be of any use to purge the heart, or sanctify the soul, I utterly disbelieve! What does it matter whether you go to church or not? Whether you use a prayer book or a hymnal or not, or whether you bend your knee morning and evening or not, if these things have no effect upon youif you walk after the flesh and not after the Spirit? You may as well leave off these religious fashions, though it may seem rather bold to say so. I would rather you put off every sham because then you would know where and what you are! Religious pretence only deceives others and fools yourselves. We always talk about England as a Christian country. We are wrong! It is not a Christian, it is a heathen country! There are some Christians in it, thank God! But the country is not a Christian country. The Metropolis is not Christian. London, herself, is a heathen city. Vice and violence, lewdness and licentiousness are as ripe in her as they are in Paris or Vienna, Calcutta or Bombay! You need not go far afieldtake the nearest court, or the blind alley that leads out of the main street, or go into some of the great houses at the West End and you will see in them such awful abominations as might convince you that their frequenters say, in their heart, there is no God, or, if they worshipped a deity, it was Buddha or Vishnu! Count the churches, count the chapels, take account of the mission stationssum up all the outward privileges and mark the condition! In the teeth of them all, we may say sin is growing more rampant! The more religion, the more sin, if it is a religion of outward rites without the power of godliness! Jerusalem was the worst of cities and yet the most religious. It was the most profane because it was the most sanctimoniousits piety being a mere empty profession. In no other city was there so much lip-service, cringing and bowing. In offering oblations and burning incense, she was pre-eminent! Still, no other city had such a reputation for stoning the Prophets!   
And it may be that your real character may be as little in keeping with your pretensions. You may have prayers every morning and Bible readings every day. You may resort to sacraments, practice genuflections, observe festivals and make pilgrimagesall to no purpose! Your seeming sanctity may be only a mask, covering up folly and vice. The balance is on the wrong side. Your creed has aggravated your crimes! Your religion has precipitated your ruin. The tag-raggery of vestments and ceremonies are but the histrionics of religion in which amateurs delight! All their mystery and pomp are mere stage play. No benefit whatever can you derive from such principles or such performances. All the trust you put in them must entail miserable disappointmentsit may involve you in desperate consequences! No lies can be harmless! Self-deception must be deadly! Lend me your eyes and I will show you the worst man in Jerusalem. What? Do you think that I am going to point out that tax-gatherer? By no means! He is a scoundrel, I admit. He exacted three times as much as he ought of that poor widow, and drained her resources. No doubt he is a real bad fellow, but I know a worse. Go knock at the door of yon affluent rabbiyou cannot be admitted just yet. Ask the servant where his master is. He will tell you that he is at prayers. He will not be at liberty for three-quarters of an hour at least. You must wait, I suppose, until this gentleman has finished his devotions. After a while he condescends to put in an appearance. You look at him with surprise. Whatever is that remarkable feature on his forehead? You might fancy he must have fallen down and bruised himself, and put a piece of plaster on his forehead. Oh, nothat little box on his forehead is inscribed with texts of Scripture! A Bible precept supplies him with a bold pretextYou shall bind them for a frontal between your eyes. So, like a fool, taking the sound and leaving the sense, he has inserted a series of texts into a box and tied it on to his head! And, oh, what a deep fringe he has to his robe! It is half as long as his robe. What is that for? Because he is told to have a border to his garment and so he has it broadhalf an inch would have done, but he has it seven inches at least! He cannot do anything in moderation as it should be done. He must carry everything to an extreme. If you wish to speak to this gentleman, you find he really cannot attend to you because he is just going up to the Templehe has a little account to pay there. He shows it to you. Of course, he says he likes to show it. You can see how precise he is. It is a farthingand an eighth part of it is for mint he has been using. He is very careful about tiny matters. Before he goes to pay that, he tells the servant to mind and strain out all the gnats, lest he should swallow any unclean animal when he drinks his wine. Follow him up to the Temple and you will observe him standing by himself. He is saying, God, I thank You that I am not as other men are. It is rude, perhaps, to pry into his private doings, but as he is gone out, just let us take a look into this little sanctum and see his accounts. We begin to look at them and we must be quick, for fear he should come and catch us. Look at this entry, Half a dozen widows houses devoured last week. Go on and you will see all sorts of bad things that he has been doing. He would not have been such an atrocious villain had it not been for his religion! He wraps that about him as a cloak and it prevents his seeing what a great sinner he is. Perhaps if he did not practice so much piety, he might be shocked at his lack of morality. As Jesus said to the Pharisees, If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say you seetherefore, your sin remains.

This man pretends to be a saint, but he proves to be a devil! His soaring profession aggravates his heartless infamy. Surely, I think, this example falls fairly within the scope of my text. Jerusalem, as a locality, the center of devoutness, became the cesspool of corruption! If you have the cherubim without the Shekinah. If you have the sacred symbols without the sanctifying Spirit. If you have the sound creed without the lively faith. If you have Gospel in the pulpit without Grace in the heart. If you have Protestant Christianity without a precious Christ, then the decadence of your religion will lead to the demoralizing of your character! The mere possession of the outward means of Grace may have no better effect than that of making men worse. Yet it entails a very solemn responsibility. No man can sin after he has received the Light of God from above, so cheaply as he does who commits his transgressions in the dark. When you are warned, and entreated, and begged to turn from the error of your waysshould you still pursue them, Being often warned, and hardening your neck, the sentence is, you shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy. I believe some hyper-Calvinists raise an objection to the responsibility of man while hearing the Gospel. And there are several other things to which they likewise object, but I hope we shall always accept the testimony of Gods Word without distorting it, whether it is agreeable or distasteful to us. As for me, I have braved the sneer of men because I feared the frown of my Lord. But now they are dead that troubled me and it is not likely that I shall cease to speak of unbelief as other than a grievous sin, a capital crime and an aggravation of all other transgressions! The Gospel is either a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death to everyone of you who hears it. If it is not a stone of help, it will become a stone of stumbling. You will either fall upon it and be broken, or it will fall upon you and grind you to powder! Beware, you that hear the Gospel and trifle with it, lest it be said unto you, Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish.   
I believe that throughout eternity the punishment of the guilty will be aggravated forever by the privileges against which they have persisted in sinning. To sink into perdition from the shadow of the Gospel is possible. To go down with warnings of judgment and wooing of mercy sounding in ones ears is suicidal! To leap into the Pit headfirst and to find out the deepest depths of dire despair is dreadful beyond description! To think of it conjures up thoughts from which we recoil. Oh, call it not a fatal mistake, for it is a foul crime! The heathen, who never heard of Christ, cannot accuse themselves of having wasted Sabbaths and rejected a Savior. But Sabbath after Sabbath you who have had the Gospel delivered in your hearingyou will have to bear a reproach like this, You knew the Gospel, but loved it not! This shall be the perpetual worm that shall never die. There was a time when God called. He himself said it, I called, but you refused; I stretched out My hand, and no man regarded it; therefore, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear comes. In like manner Jesus says, Woe unto you, Chorazin; woe unto you, Bethsaida; it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you. The privilege in each instance clenches the responsibility. Oh, may this solemn Truth of God abide with each of us!   
Now let me, in closing, give a slightly different tone to our meditation. We have seen that Jerusalem had a monopoly of one sinshe killed the Prophets.   
III. THERE ARE SINS WHICH GODS PEOPLE, HIS REAL PEOPLE, TRUE AND GENUINE SAINTS, MAY BE CHARGED WITHno, of which they may accuse themselves, as exclusively their own! Possibly the very mention of them may lead us to repent and bring us back, again, humbly and penitently to the foot of the Cross that we may accept with the more gratitude the full Atonement which our Savior made. You and I are, dear Friends, the children of God in a sense in which other men are notwe are part of His great family. Being regenerated and adopted, we have received the nature of children and been put into their status. Other men are but subjects under His Lawwe are sons and daughters. No servant can sin as a child can. A servant and a son may both be guilty of the same offense, but there is a difference in the degree of guilt, because of the relationship. A father may well say, My servant ought not to have done thishe has offended me. But as for you, my own child, my beloved, you have grieved me to my heart, for you have sinned against a fathers love as well as against a fathers authority. You are bound to me by ties so close that you ought to have been more scrupulous. I can understand a servant injuring my property or my reputation, but to my child, both of these should be very dear. There seems to me to be a baseness about the ingratitude of a child with which the unkindness of a friend will not compare. Sharper than an adders tooth is the conduct of a thankless child, because he is a child. I do not think it is possible for anyone not related to break and wound a mothers heart as her own child can. You Christians can easily apply this reflection to yourselves. There is a peculiar wickedness about your sin. In the judgment of others it is the same, but in your own judgment, if you think of your heavenly Father and your nearness to Him, it will seem to be far worse. Dear Friend, remember you are not only a child, but sometimes you rejoice to think that you are Christs spouse! Now, ones spouse lies very near ones heart. Another person may say something against me, and I might pass it over. A remark which, coming from a stranger, or even from a friend, we might slight, but did it come from ones own spouse, it would cut deep into the very soul! You would say, It was not an enemy. Then I could have borne it. But it was youyou who rests in my bosom and enjoys my perfect confidenceyou have lifted up your heel against me. Say, then, child of God, do you not see that your sins may have a peculiar heinousness about them? Them may be a stoning of Prophets, and a crucifying of Christ in your misdeeds! Although still favored as a bride, never to be divorced, your crime is bitter and to be repented of bitterly.   
There is one sin which has often oppressed my heart, and I dare say it has yours. We grow cold in love to our Savior. Some of you do not love your Savior with the same warmth and devotedness you did at first. There may be those among you who plead not guilty. I wish most of you could, but, alas, how many of you have to look back upon former days and say, O that it were with me as in the days that are past! More cause you have for loving Himmore coals have been put on the fire, but yet it is less hot and burns less brightly! More stones have been thrown on the marker and yet it is smaller than it was at first! Oh, strange it is we sometimes even almost wonder to see itthat some who since they first came to Christ and rested only on Him, have had many gifts and Graces vouchsafed to themhave almost put them in the place of Him who gave them! Master Brookes says, Suppose a loving husband were to hang his wifes ears with earrings, and put jewels about her neck, and rings upon her fingersand she got so fond of all these pretty things that she forgot her husband? It would be a sad thing if love tokens should make us forget the hand that gave them. This case is just like ourswe begin looking at our own good works and Graces and get to be so pleased that we forget from whom they cameand look upon them as our own! Whereas there is no luster in them except that which is reflectedand we shall soon lose even the reflection if we get contented with them. We must look to Christ, and Him alone! Shame on us Christians that we should be thus remiss and negligent of our deepest, most tender obligations! This is a vice to which even the heathen are not prone.   
Do you ever hear of a nation forsaking its gods? Well might the Prophet expostulate, since no other nation forsook its gods, yet Israel forsook hers! Worldly men do not forsake their pursuits with the indifference that you forsake yours. They grow more and more enamored of the flaunting charms of that woman Jezebel, the world, while our hearts, alas, are often forgetful of our fair, infinitely fair, Lord Jesus, and go rambling abroad with some other love! This is a sin which none but Christians commit! And what shall I say of the doubts we cast upon the faithfulness of God, after having proved it so conspicuously? No unconverted person can have proved it as we have done. There are promises of which anyone, especially the stranger within our gates, might have availed himself. The world, however, discredits sheer worth. But some of you have gone to the Throne of Grace with pleas based on promises not once onlyperhaps if I should say you have gone hundreds and thousands of times, I should not exceed the number of proofs you have made of the Divine faithfulness! Fifty years have transpired since some of you came to the Lord, and you never found Him slack. He never dishonored His own WordHe has been faithful and true in the midst of all that was fleeting and transient. Yet your heart flutters and your lips murmur when a fresh trial arises. How can you be so distrustful, so provoking? Airy says, If there is a God, if prayer can prevail, if there is any kind of piety that is not a baseless presumptionall these are moot questions with the men of this generation. But you know there is a God! You know He hears prayer! You know He honors obedience and fulfils every tittle He has spoken! Why should you ever harbor a doubt, or cherish a misgiving? Is it not monstrous? Doubt, now? What fresh pledge, what further guarantee can you require? Do strive earnestly. Do pray constantly that this accursed unbelief may be cast out of you! Are you not heirs of Heaven? Are you not looking for and waiting for the coming of the Son of God? Shall your faith be steadfast as to the goal, and yet in suspense as to the journey?

With such seed thoughts have I ruminated on my text, It cannot be that a Prophet should perish out of Jerusalem. Jerusalem! Your name suggests to me all that is beautiful for situation, and all that is precious for privilegesand yet I tremble at your history, for it is a record of mischief and misery! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Rather had I sung your praise than rehearsed your crimes! But, O God, let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be alike acceptable to You! May such warnings be as fruitful as any wooing in drawing reluctant hearts to right allegiance. This is my last wordBelieve and live! Amen.

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 #1354 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

ALL THINGS ARE READY, COME   
NO. 1354

**DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, MAY 13, 1877, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Come, for all things are now ready.   
Luke 14:17.**

THIS invitation was first of all made to the Jews, but it seems to me to have a peculiar appropriateness to ourselves. It is later in the day than when first the Lord was here and, therefore, the supper time is evidently closer at hand. The shadows lengthen, the sun of the present dispensation is nearing its settingby nearly 1,900 years has its day been shortened since first the Lord sent forth His servants at supper time. The fullness of time for the marriage supper of the Lamb must speedily arrive and, therefore, it behooves us to be more than ever earnest in delivering the message to the invited guests. And if all things could be said to be ready, even in our Saviors day, we may say it with still greater emphasis now, for when He delivered this parable, the Holy Spirit was not yet given.

But Pentecost has now passed and the Spirit of God abides with us to accompany the Word, to fill it with power and to bless our souls as we feed upon His Truth. Very emphatically, then, at this time all things are now ready and the supper awaits the guests! I pray you do not begin to make excuses, but be prepared to follow us when we bid you come, to go with us when we seek to bring you in, or at least to yield to our entreaties when, with all the sacred violence of love, we would compel you to come in. We will not grudge the use of all the three increasing modes of persuasion so long as you are but led to Come, for all things are now ready.

There are two things clearly in the text and these have a close relation to one another. A plain invitationCome, and then a forcible argumentfor all things are ready. The argument is fetched from the Divine preparations, gathered from among the dainty provisions of the royal feast. My oxen and My fatlings are killed, come to the supper. The readiness of everything on Gods part is the argument why men should come and partake of His Graceand that is the point upon which we will dwell at this timethe readiness of the feast of mercy is the reason why men should come to it at once.

I. We will begin our meditation by laying down the first statement which shall make our first division of discourse, namely that IT IS GODS HABIT TO HAVE ALL THINGS READY, whether for His guests or His creatures. You never discover Him to be behind in anything. When the guests come, there is not a scramble to get the table arranged and the food prepared, but the Lord has great forethought and every little point of detail is

well arranged. All things are ready. It was so in creation.

He did not create a single blade of grass upon the face of the earth until the soil and the atmosphere had been prepared for it and until the kindly sun had learned to look down upon the earth. Imagine vegetation without a sun, or without the alternation of day and night! But the air was full of light, the firmament upheld the clouds and the dry land had appeared from out of the seaand then all things were ready for herbs and plants and trees. Nor did God prepare one single creature that has life, nor fowl that flies in the midst of Heaven, nor fish that swim the seas, nor beast that moves on the dry land until He had prepared its habitat and made ready its appointed food.

There were no cattle before there were meadows for their grazing. There were no birds till there were trees for their nests, no, nor even a creeping insect till its portion of meat had been provided. No creature had to wait in a hungry mood while its food was growingall things were ready ready, first, for vegetation, and then afterwards for animal life. As for Adam, when God came to make Him as His last and noblest work of creation, all things were ready. The garden was laid out upon the banks of flowing streams and planted with all kinds of trees. The fruits were ripe for his diet and the flowers in bloom for his delight.

He did not come to an unfurnished house, but he entered into a home which his Father had made pleasant and agreeable for his dwelling. The world was first fitted up and then the man who was to govern that world was placed in it. All things are ready, the Lord seems to say, Spring up, O herbs yielding seed. And then, All things are ready, come forth you roes and hinds of the field! And then, All things are ready, stand forth, O man, made in My own image! In later times we may gather illustrations of the same Truth of God from the ways of God with men. The Ark was first of all built and the various creatures were gathered into it, with all their necessary food for that strange voyage which they were about to take. And then the Lord said to Noah, Come you and all your house into the Ark. All things are ready, come, was His voice to the chosen eight as they entered into the Ark. There was no need to tarry any longer. Every preparation was made and, therefore, God shut them in. Everything is done with punctuality and exactness by the only wise God. The same day that a thing is needed, it is prepared.

Take another event in Providence, such as the going down of Israel into Egypt. God had determined that Jacob and his seed should sojourn, awhile, in the land of Ham, but how wisely He prepared the whole matter. He sent a man before them, even Joseph, and Joseph was there upon the throne of Egypt clothed with power to nourish them through the famine. He had been there years before, all in good time to store the wheat while the seven years of plenty lasted, that they might be well fed during the seven years of famine.

Goshen, also, was at the disposal of Joseph, so that the flocks and herds of Israel might dwell in that fat land. Not into Egypt shall Gods Israel go till all things are ready! And when all things are ready they will come out again with a high hand and an outstretched arm! So it was when the tribes migrated into Canaan itself. God took them not to the promised land until all things were ready. They were made to wait for the exact time, for the Lord said, The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. Not till the inhabitants of the land had passed the bounds of mercy and were condemned to die, were the Israelites brought upon the scene to be, at once, their executioners and successors!

And when the tribes came to the river Jordan, God had prepared everything for them, for He had sent the hornet before them to drive out the people and a pestilence, also, for the spies said, It is a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof. The Lord God had gone before them to fight their battles before they came and to prepare a place for them, so that when they entered they dwelt in houses which they had not built and they gathered the fruit of olives which they had not planted. They came to a land that flowed with milk and honey, a land in a fine cultivated condition and not a wilderness which must be reclaimed with hard labor. Israel came to a country which was as the garden of the Lord, whose fruit might at once be enjoyed, for they ate of the old corn of the land almost as soon as they passed the Jordan. So you see, All things are ready, is a proclamation which the Lord has often, in spirit, made to those whom He chooses to bless.

Now the fact that in the great Gospel supper all things are ready teaches us, first, that Gods thoughts go before mens comings. Come, for all things are ready. Not, If you come, all things will be ready, but, they are ready and, therefore, come. Grace is first, and man at his best follows its footsteps. Long before we ever thought of God, He thought of us! Yes, before we had a being and time, itself, began, in the bosom of the Eternal there were thoughts of love towards those for whom the table of His mercy is now spread!

He had planned and arranged everything in His august mind from of old. He had, indeed, foreknown and predestinated all the provisions and all the guests of His supper! All things were settled in His eternal Covenant and purpose before the earth was! Never think, oh Sinner, that you can outstrip the love of God! It is at the end of the race before you are at the beginning! God has completed before you have begun. His thoughts are before ours and so are His acts, for He does not say, All things are planned and arranged, but, All things are ready. Jesus, the great Sacrifice, is slain! The Fountain for our cleansing is filled with blood! The Holy Spirit has been given. The Word by which we are to be instructed is in our hands and the light which will illuminate that sacred page is promised us through the Holy Spirit.

Things promised ought to encourage us to come to Christ, but things already given ought to be irresistible attractions. All things are already completed by the sacred Trinity before we come to cry for mercy. This

should make us very hopeful and eager in our approaches to the Lord. Come, Sinner! Come at once! This ought to encourage you, since all that God has to do in your salvation is done before you have a thought of Him or turn one foot towards His abode. All things are ready. Come!

This, also, proves how welcome those are who come. If you are invited to see a friend and when you reach the place, you find the door locked and, after knocking many times no one answers, for there is no one at home, you reckon that there is some mistake, or that the invitation was not a sincere one. Even if your host should come to the door and let you in, but should evidently be embarrassed, for there is no meal provided and he has made no arrangements for your rest, you soon detect it and like a wise man you quickly move off somewhere else, for if you had been welcome, things would have been prepared for you. But oh, poor Soul, if you come to God, all things are ready for your entertainment

*Spread for you the festive board,*

*With His richest dainties stored.*   
The couch of rest and quietness is prepared for you. All things are ready! How freely does Jehovah welcome you, how genuine is the invitation, how sincere the desire that you should come to feast with Him!

So much upon our first remark. It is the habit of the Lord to have all things ready for His guests.   
II. Our second statement is that THIS READINESS SHOULD BE AN ARGUMENT THAT HIS SAINTS SHOULD COME continually to Him and find Grace to help in every time of need. O children of God, I will lift the parable away from the immediate use which the Savior made of it to employ it for your good. You know, Beloved, that whenever the Lord Jesus Christ invites His people to come to Him and to taste of His bounty, all things are ready.   
It was a beautiful scene by the sea of Tiberias when the Lord spoke to those who had been toiling on the lake at fishing and said to them, Come and dine. They were willing enough to dine, but they were busy dragging to the shore those great fishes. Remember, when they did land, they found the invitation to be no vain one, for it is written, They saw a fire of coals there and fish laid thereon, and bread. How the coals came there and the fish, and the bread, the Evangelist does not tell us, but our Lord would not have asked them to dinner if He had not been able to give them a warm reception. There were the fire of coals and the fish and bread laid on them.   
Whenever, therefore, your Lord and Master, by His blessed Spirit, calls you to come near to Him, you may be quite sure that all things are ready for your immediate enjoyment. You need never pause or hesitate, but approach Him without delay. I want to caution you against replying, But, Lord, I do not feel ready. That is most true, but that is not an argument which you should use to excuse yourself in holding back. It is His readiness that is the main thing, not yours, and as all things are ready, come whether you feel ready or not!   
I have heard of some Christians who have said, I do not feel in a proper frame of mind to pray. My Brothers and Sisters, pray till you do! Some have said, I do not think I shall go up to the house of God today. I feel so unhappy, so cast down. When should you go so much as then, in order that you may find comfort? Still, says one, you would not have me sing a hymn when of heavy heart, would you? Yes, I would, I would, indeed! I would have you sing yourself up from the depths of the sea when all Gods billows have gone over you. David full often did so. When he began a Psalm in the deeps, he gradually rose and rose, and rose till he was in a perfect rapture of delight before the Psalm was over! All things are ready with your Lord, therefore come whether you happen to be ready or not!   
Note the times when this Truth of God ought to have power with you. All things are ready, therefore come to the storehouse of Divine promises. Are you in spiritual poverty? Come and take what God has provided for you, for all things are yours and all the blessings of the everlasting hills belong to all the people of God. Are you needing strength? There is a promise, As your days so shall your strength be. It is ready, come and take it! Are you needing consolation? Do you not know that all things are ready for your comfort, that two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, are already set before you? Come and take your solace! Yes, remember that all that God has promised belongs to all those who believe the promise and that you may, therefore, come at all times, however deep your need. And if you have but faith you shall find the special supply for the special need. All things are ready, therefore come with holy confidence and take what is ripe enough to gather, ripe for you. Come next to the Mercy Seat in prayer, all things are ready there. The Mercy Seat is sprinkled with the precious blood of Christ. The veil, also, is torn in two, and from between the cherubim Jehovahs Glory now shines forth with mildest radiance. Let us, therefore, come with boldness unto the Throne of the heavenly Grace, because everything there is ready for the pleading suppliant. You have no need to bring anything with you. You have no need of making preparations other than the Holy Spirit waits to give you in the form of groans which cannot be uttered! Come, child of God, notwithstanding your carelessness and indifference, or whatever it may be you have to complain of, for though you are unready, the Throne of Grace is ready and, therefore, draw near to it and find the Grace you need.   
If at this time we feel strong promptings towards communion with Christ, what a blessing it is that Christ is always ready to commune with His people. Behold, He says, I stand at the door and knock. We think that we stand at the door and knock, but it is scarcely so. The greater Truth, with regard to His people, is that Jesus asks for fellowship with us and tells us that if we open the doorand that is all He bids His people doHe will enter in and sup with them and they with Him. Suppose there is no supper, He will provide itHe has all things ready. The Master says, Where is the guest chamber? He does not say, Where is the feast? If Your heart will be the guest chamber, He will provide the supper and you shall sup with Him and He with you.   
At whose door did Christ knock according to the Scriptures? It was at the door of the Laodicean Church, at the door of the very Church concerning which He had said, Because you are neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth. Therefore you poor Laodicean Believers that are here this morning, if you have any promptings towards Christ, arise, for all things are ready and before you are aware, your soul shall be as the chariots of Amminadab! He is ready to receive us to His heart of hearts! How sweetly this ought to constrain us to fly into the arms of Jesus. I think the same thought ought to cross our minds with regard to every daily duty. We wake up in the morning, but we do not know exactly what lies before us, for Gods Providence has constantly new revelations.   
But I like to think, in the morning, that all things are ready for my pathway through the day. That if I will go out to serve God in my ministry, He has prepared some ear into which I am to drop a gracious word and some heart in the furrows of which I shall effectually sow some blessed seed! Behold, all Providence with its mighty wheels is co-working with the servant of the living God! Only go forward in zeal and confidence, my Brother, and you shall find that every step of your way is ready for you! Your Master has trod the road and marked out for you the houses of refreshment where you are to tarry till you shall come to the Celestial City, itself, and the hallowed spots where you shall bring glory to His blessed name! For a useful life all things are ready for us.   
Yes, and if beyond the daily service of life we should feel a prompting to aspire to a higher degree of holinessif we want to grow in Grace and reach the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesusall things are ready for us! No Christian can have a sacred ambition after holiness which the Lord is not prepared to fulfill. You that wish to be like Your Master, you that desire to make a self-sacrifice that will show the power of His Grace in youthe Holy Spirit waits to help youall things shall work for you, for all things are ready! Come, therefore, without fear.   
One of these days it may be that you and I shall either be grown very old, or else disease will lay hold upon us and we shall lie upon the sick bed watching and waiting for our Masters coming. Then there shall suddenly appear a messenger from Him who will bring us this word, All things are ready, come unto the supper, and closing our eyes on earth we shall open them in Heaven and see what He has done who so sweetly said, I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.   
Oh, it will be a joyous moment when we shall hear the summons, All things are ready, quit your house of clay, your farm, your merchandise and even her who lies in your bosom, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and you must be there! Therefore, rise up, My love, My fair one and come away. The winter is over and past, the time of the singing of birds is come for you, all things are ready, come!  
I feel tempted to linger here, but I must tear myself away from this point to pass on to the next.   
III. THE PERFECT READINESS OF THE FEAST OF DIVINE MERCY IS EVIDENTLY INTENDED TO BE A STRONG ARGUMENT WITH SINNERS WHY THEY SHOULD COME AT ONCE. To the sinner, then, do I address myself. Soul, do you desire eternal life? Is there within your spirit a hungering and a thirsting after such things as may satisfy Your spirit and make you live forever? Then hearken while the Masters servant gives you the invitation. Come, for all things are readyall, not somebut all! There is nothing that you can need between here and Heaven but what is provided in Jesus Christin His Person and in His work.   
All things are readylife for your death, forgiveness for your sin, cleansing for your filth, clothing for your nakedness, joy for your sorrow, strength for your weaknessyes, more than all that you can ever need is stored up in the boundless Nature and work of Christ. You must not say, I cannot come because I have not this, or have not that. Are you to prepare the feast? Are you to provide anything? Are you the purveyor of even so much as the salt or the water? You know not your true condition or you would not dream of such a thing! The great Master of the house, Himself, has provided the whole of the feastyou have nothing to do with the provision but to partake of it! If you lack, come and take what you lack!   
The greater your need, the greater reason why you should come where all things that your needs can possibly lack will at once be supplied! If you are so needy that you have nothing good at all about you, all things are ready. What would you provide when God has provided all things? Superfluity of naughtiness would it be if you were to think of adding to His, all things. It would be but a presumptuous competing with the provisions of the great Kingand this He will not tolerate. All that you needI can but repeat the wordsbetween the gates of Hell, where you now lie, and the gates of Heaven, to which Grace will bring you if you believeall is provided and prepared in Jesus Christ the Savior!

And all things are ready, dwell on that. The oxen and the fatlings were killed. What is more, they were prepared to be eaten, they were ready to be feasted on, they smoked on the board. It is something when the king gives orders for the slaughter of so many bullocks for the feast, but the feast is not ready. And when, beneath the poleax, the victims fall and they are stripped and hung up ready for the fire, there is something done, but they are not ready. It is when the meat is served hot and steaming upon the table and all that is needed is brought forth and laid in proper order for the banquet it is then that all things are ready!   
And this is the case now. At this very moment you will find the feast to be in the best possible condition. It was never better and never can be better than it is now. All things are ready, just in the exact condition that you need them to be, just in such condition as shall be best for your souls comfort and enjoyment. All things are ready! Nothing needs to be further mellowed or sweetened. Everything is at the best that eternal love can make it. But notice the word, now. All things are now readyjust nowat this moment! At feasts, you know, the good housewife is often troubled if the guests come late. She would be sorry if they came half-anhour too soon, but half-an-hour too late spoils everything! And in what a state of fret and worry is she if, when all things are now ready, her friends still delay.   
Leave food on the fire, awhile, and it does not seem to be, now ready, but something more than ready and even spoiled. So does the great Master of the house lay stress upon this, all things are now ready, therefore come at once. He does not say that if you will tarry for another seven years, all things will, then, be readyGod grant that long before that space of time, you may have got beyond the needs of persuasion by having become a taster of the feastbut He says that all things are ready now, just now. Just now that your heart is so heavy and your mind is so careless. Just now that your spirit is so wanderingall things are ready now!   
They are all ready just now though you have never thought of these things before and dropped in this morning to see this large assembly with no motive whatever as to your own salvation, yet all things are ready now. Though your sins are as the stars of Heaven and your soul trembles under an awful foreboding of coming judgment, yet, all things are now ready. After all your rejections of Christ. After the many invitations that have been thrown away upon you, come to the supper! And if they are ready now, the argument is come, now, while still all things are ready. While the Spirit lingers and still strives with men. While mercys gates still stand wide open that, whoever will, may come. While life and health and reason still are spared to you and the ministering voice that bids you come can still be heard, come now, come at onceall things are ready come! Delay is as unreasonable as it is wicked, now that all things are ready.   
Notice that all things were ready for those who were bid. They did not come, but they were not mocked when they were bid to come. The fact of all things being ready proved that the invitation was a sincere one, although it was a rejected one. There are some who will not have us give an invitation to any but to those whom we believe are sure to come, no, in a measure have come. That is to say, they make a minister to be a mere superfluity. Why need he come and invite those who have already begun to come?   
But we believe it to be our duty and our privilege to invite the whole mass of mankind! And even those who will not comeif we knew they would not come we should not, therefore, exempt them from the bidding for the servant was sent to bid them to the wedding who, nevertheless, all with one consent began to make excuse. They were invited and earnestly invited, and all things were ready, though they came not. O my dear Hearers, if you do not come to Christ you will perish! But you will never be able to say you were not invited and that there was nothing ready for you! No, there stands the feast all spread and you are sincerely and honestly bid to come. God grant that you may come and come at once!  
IV. Now I am going to pass on to my fourth and last point, which may God bless to the comfort of some seeking soul. THIS TEXT DISPOSES OF A GREAT DEAL OF TALK ABOUT THE SINNERS READINESS OR UNREADINESS, because, if the reason why a sinner is to come is because all things are ready, then it is idle for him to say, But I am not ready. It is clear that all the readiness required on mans part is a willingness to come and receive the blessing which God had provided. There is nothing else necessary. If men are willing to come, they may come. They will come when the Lord has been pleased to touch their wills so that man has a desire towards Christ. Where the heart really hungers and thirsts after righteousness, that is all the readiness which is needed.   
All the fitness He requires is that first you feel your need of Him, (and that He gives you), and that secondly, in feeling your need of Him, you are willing to come to Him. Willingness to come is everything! A readiness to believe in Jesus, a willingness to cast the soul on Him, a preparedness to accept Him just as He is, because you feel that He is just the Savior that you needthat is all. There was no other readiness. There could have been none in the case of those who were poor and blind, and crippled and maimed, yet came to the feast. The text does not say, You are ready, therefore come. That is a legal way of putting the Gospel. No, the Gospel says, All things are ready, the Gospel is ready, therefore you are to come. As for your readiness, all the readiness that is possibly needed is a readiness which the Spirit gives us, namely, willingness to come to Jesus.   
Now notice that the unreadiness of those who were bid arose out of their possessions and out of their abilities. One would not come because he had bought a piece of land. What a great heap Satan casts up between the soul and the Savior! What with worldly possessions and good deeds, he builds an earthwork of huge dimensions between the sinner and his Lord. Some gentlemen have too many acres to ever come to Christ! They think too much of the world to think much of Him. Many have too many fields of good works in which there are growing crops in which they pride themselves and these cause them to feel that they are persons of great importance. Many a man cannot come to Christ for all things because he has so much already!   
Others of them could not come because they had so much to do and could do it wellone had bought five yoke of oxen. He was going to test them. A strong man, quite able for plowing, did not come because he had so much ability. Thousands are kept away from Grace by what they have and by what they can do. Emptiness is more preparatory to a feast than fullness. How often does it happen that poverty and even inability help to lead the soul to Christ? When a man thinks himself to be rich he will not come to the Savior. When a man dreams that he is able to repent and believe at any time and to do everything for himself that is needed, he is not likely to come and by a simple faith repose in Christ. It is not what you have not, but what you have that keeps many of you from Christ! Sinful self is a devil, but righteous self is seven devils! The man who feels himself guilty may, for a while, be kept away by his guilt. But the man who is self-righteous will never come! Until the Lord has taken his pride away from him, he will still refuse the feast of Free Grace. The possession of abilities and honors and riches keep men from coming to the Redeemer.   
But on the other hand, personal condition does not constitute an unfitness for coming to Christ, for the sad condition of those who became guests did not debar them from the supper. Some were poor and doubtless wretched and raggedthey had not a penny to bless themselves with, as we say. Their garments were tattered, perhaps worse. They were filthy. They were not fit to be near respectable peoplethey would certainly be no credit to my Lords tablebut those who went to bring them in did not search their pockets, nor look at their coatsthey fetched them in. They were poor, but the messengers were told to bring in the poor and, therefore, brought them. Their poverty did not prevent their being ready and oh, poor Soul, if you are literally poor, or spiritually poor, neither sort of poverty can constitute an unfitness for Divine mercy!   
*The poorer the wretch the more welcome here.*   
If you are brought to your last penny, yes, if that is spent. And if you have pawned all and are left in debt over your head and think that there is nothing for you but to be laid by the heels in prison forever, nevertheless you may come, poverty and all! Another class of them were maimed and so were not very comely in appearancean arm had been lopped off, or an eye had been gouged out. One had lost a nose and another a leg. They were in all stages and shapes of dismemberment. Sometimes we turn our heads away and feel that we would rather give anything than look upon beggars who show their wounds and describe how they were maimed. But it did not matter how badly they were disfiguredthey were brought in and not one of them was repulsed because of the ugly cuts he had received!   
So, poor Soul, however Satan may have torn and lopped you, and into whatever condition he may have brought you, so that you feel ashamed to live, nevertheless this is no unfitness for coming! Just as you are, you may come to His table of Grace. Moral disfigurements are soon rectified when Jesus takes the character in hand. Come to Him, however sadly you are injured by sin. There were others who were halt, that is to say, they had lost a leg, or it was of no use to them, and they could not come except they had a crutch and crawled or hopped upon it. But nevertheless that was no reason why they were not welcome.

Ah, if you find it difficult to believe, it is no reason why you should not come and receive the grand absolution which Jesus Christ is ready to bestow upon you! Lame with doubts and distrust? Nevertheless come to the supper and say, Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief. Others were blind people and when they were told to come they could not see the way, but in that case the messenger was not told to tell them to comehe was commanded to bring themand a blind man can come if he is brought. All that was needed was willingness to be led by the hand in the right direction. Now, you that cannot fully understand the Gospel as you desire to do. You that are puzzled and muddled, give your hand to Jesus and be willing to be ledbe willing to believe what you cannot comprehend and to grasp in confidence that which you are not able yet to measure with your understanding. The blind, however ignorant or uninstructed they are, shall not be kept away because of that.   
Then there were the men in the highways. I suppose they were beggars. And the men in the hedges. I suppose they were hiding and were probably thieves. But nevertheless they were told to come and though they were highwaymen and hedge-birds, even that did not prevent their coming and finding welcome! Though outcasts, off casts, spiritual gypsiespeople that nobody cared for, yet, whatever they might be, that was not the question they were to come because all things were ready! They could come in rags, come in filth, come maimed, come covered with sores, come in all sorts of filthiness and abomination, yet because all things are ready they were to be brought or to be compelled to come in.   
Now, lastly, I think it was the very thing which, in any one of these people, looked like unfitness, was a help to them. It is a great truth that what we regard as unfitness is often our truest fitness. I want you to notice these poor, blind and lame people. Some of those who were invited would not come because they had bought some land, or five yoke of oxen. But when the messenger went up to the poor man in rags and said, Come to the supper, it is quite clear he would not say he had bought a field, or oxen, for he could not do it. He had not a penny to do the thing with, so that he was clean delivered from that temptation.   
And when a man is invited to come to Christ and he says, I do not need Him, I have a righteousness of my own, he will stay away. But when the Lord Jesus came along to me, I never was tempted in that way, because I had no righteousness of my own and could not have made any if I had tried! I know some here who could not patch up a garment of righteousness if they were to put all their rags togetherand this is a great help to their receiving the Lord Jesus. What a blessing it is to have such a sense of soul poverty that you will never stay away from Christ because of what you possess!   
Then, next, some could not come because they had married a wife. Now, I think it is very likely that these people who were maimed and cut about were so injured that they had no wife and perhaps could not get anybody to have them. Well then, they had not that temptation to stay away. They were too maimed to attract the eye of anybody who was looking for beauty and, therefore, they were not tempted that way. But they found at the ever-blessed supper of the Lamb an everlasting wedlock which was infinitely better! Thus do souls lose earthly joys and comforts and, by the loss, they gain supremelythey are thus made willing to close in with Christ and find a higher comfort and a higher joy! That maiming which looked like unfitness turned out to be fitness!   
One excuse made was, I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to test them. The lame could not do that. When the messenger touched the lame man on the shoulder and said, Come, he could not say, I am going out tonight to plow with my new teams. He had never been over the clods ever since he had lost his leg, poor soul, so that he could not make such an excuse. The blind man could not say, I have bought a piece of land and I must go see it. He was free from all the lusts of the eyes and so far was all the more ready to be led to the supper! When a soul feels its own sinfulness, wretchedness and lost estate, it thinks itself unfit to come to Christbut this is an assistance to itsince it prevents its looking to anything else but Christ! It kills its excuses and makes it free to accept salvation by Grace.   
But what about the men that were in the highway? Well, it seems to me that they were already on the road and at least out of their houses, if they had any. If they were out there begging, they were the more ready to accept an invitation to a meal of good food, for it was that they were singing for. A man who is out of the house of his own self-righteousness, though he is a great sinner, is in a more favorable position and more likely to come to Christ than he who prides himself in his supposed selfrighteousness.   
As for those who were under the hedges, well, they had no house of their own and so they were all the more likely to come and fill Gods House. Men do not take to hedges to sleep under them as long as they have, even, a hovel where they may rest their head. But oh, poor soul, when you are driven to such distress that you would gladly hide under any hedge--when you have nothing left but a fearful looking for of judgment! When you think yourself to be an outlaw and an outcast before God, left to wander like Cain, a waif and stray, lost to all good, you, I say, are the very man to come to Christ! Come out of your hedges, then!   
I am looking for you. Though you hide yourselves away, yet Gods own Spirit will discover you and bring you, I trust, this very morning, to feed on Divine Love! Trust Jesus Christ, that is all, just as you are, with all your unfitness and unreadiness! Take what God has made ready for you, the precious blood to cleanse you, a robe of righteousness to cover you, eternal joy to be your portion! Receive the Grace of God in Christ Jesus! Oh receive it now! God grant you may for Jesus Christs sake. Amen.

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A BAD EXCUSE IS WORSE THAN NONE   
NO. 578

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 3, 1864, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**   
AT BAYSWATER.

**And they all with one consent began to make excuses. Luke 14:18.**

THE provisions of the Gospel of Christ may well be compared to a supper, provided as they were, in the evening of the worldin these last days. The description, a great supper, is well borne out if we consider the greatness of the provisionhow much love and mercy God has displayed towards the sons of men in the Person of Christ Jesushow much power and gracious working He has shown by His Holy Spirit. A great supper it is if we think of the richness and sweetness of the provisionit is a feast worthy of the great King. The flesh of Jesus is our spiritual meat and His blood our choicest wine. Our souls are satisfied with Covenant mercies, most fitly set forth as A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

A great supper it is, moreover, when we consider the number of guests invited. Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. The call of the Gospel comes to every man and woman within hearing of the ministers of God

*None are excluded there, but those   
Who do themselves exclude!   
Welcome the learned and polite,   
The ignorant and rude.*

No other king ever sent out an invitation so broad as this! Wisdom cries at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men, I call. And my voice is to the sons of man. Is it not strange that when the householder made so great a supperwhen he offered it without money and without pricethat all his neighbors should with one consent begin to make excuse?

He did not call them to prison or to misery! How, then, came they to be so unwilling to obey the summons? Why this unanimity in the rejection? We find good men differing as to how it is that evil men can hold together so well. What? Not one who has respect enough to his generous friend to sit at his table and receive his bounty? Not one. Truly, here, Brethren, we have a picture of the universal depravity of man! All men are thus vile and refuse the mercy of God. We never know how bad man is till the Gospel is preached to him. The Gospel acts as a white background to set forth the blackness of mans heart.

Here human nature reaches to the greatest height of sins enormity! Spitting forth his venom against the Lord of Infinite Love, man proves himself truly to be of the serpents brood. The Gospel is preached to thousands and do all make excuse? So the parable has it and truly so the fact proves it. What? Is there not one whose free will is inclined towards Christ? Is there not one of so good a natural disposition that he will come to Jesus? No, the text says, not oneThey all with one consent began to

make excuses. How thoroughly has father Adam ruined our understandings! What fools, as well as rebels, we are to refuse to partake of the banquet of love! We are altogether become unprofitable. There is not one who seeks after God!

You will, perhaps, remind me that there were other men besides those who made excuses. Most true. But these were in the highways and hedges, or in the streets and lanes of the city. And so those who do not hear the Gospel and therefore are not guilty of rejecting it, yet nevertheless are far off from God by wicked works and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. Thus, taking the two characters to represent all mankind, we find all to be enemies of God. Those in the highways need to be compelled to come inthey had a natural reluctance to feast at the good mans table. And so all sorts of men are averse to the Gospel. They are perfectly willing to sincontent even to perish in sin! But to come to Christ, to accept the great Atonement, to put their trust in Jesusthis is a thing they care not for and with one consent, when they hear the Gospelthey begin to make excuses.

We fear that there are many in this meeting house this morning who have been blessed with hearing the Gospel for years but up to now the only treatment they have given to the gracious message is to make excuses about it. I hope to deal with such very simply and very affectionatelyearnestly desiring that they make their last excuse this morning and that it may meet with its death blow. O that they may come to the feast which they have long rejected and rejoice in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus!

Why did they make excuses? Let us, first, try to account for their conduct. Secondly, what excuses did they make?let us recount them. And thirdly, how foolish thus to make excuses!here let us encounter them.

I. Let us try to ACCOUNT for the fact, the sad fact, that men are so ready to make excuses rather than to receive the Word of God. We account for it in the first place by the fact that they had no heart at all to accept the feast. Had they spoken the truth plainly, they would have said, We do not wish to come, nor do we intend to do so. If mans heart were not so deceitful, it would not make excuses, but it would say outright, We will not have this Man to reign over us. We do not feel our sinfulness. We will not, therefore, accept pardon. We believe that we can work out our own salvation with our own doings.

Or, if not, we are content to take our chance. If it shall go ill with us, it will go ill with a great many people. We will run all riskswe do not need salvationwe choose rather to have our full swing of carnal delights. Your religion involves too much self-sacrifice. It is altogether contrary to the lusting of our minds and therefore we decline it. This is at the bottom of it. Some of you, my Hearers, have often been impressed and partially convinced of sin but you have put off Christ with excuses. Will you bear with me while I solemnly assure you that at its core your heart is at enmity to God? Your excuse may look very pretty but it is as flimsy as it is fair. If you were honest with your own soul you would say at once, I do not love Christ. I do not need His salvation.

Your put offs, your false promises, your excuses are worthless. Anyone with half an eye can see through them, they are so transparent. You are an enemy of God! You are unreconciled and you are content to be so. This truth may be unpalatable but it is nevertheless most certain. May God help you to feel this and may it humble you before His Presence. Still, if they would not come to the good mans feast, why did they not say so? If the real secret of it was that they hated him and despised his provisions, is it not melancholy that they were not honest enough to give him a no at once? Well, they certainly were not and one reason might be because they wished to be upon good terms with their conscience. They felt they ought to go. He was one who had a claim upon their courtesy, if not their gratitude, and therefore feeling that they ought to go and yet not intending to go, they sought to compromise by an excuse.

Conscience is a very unamiable neighbor to men who live in sin. It is said of David, Davids heart struck him, and it is a very hard blow which the heart is able to give. In order to parry the blow men hold up a shield of excuses. You cannot quite extinguish your conscience, which is the candle of the Lord and therefore you put it under the bushel of an excuse. The thief fears the watchdog and therefore throws him a bone to keep him quietthat bone is made of excuses. John Bunyan tells us that Mr. Recorder Conscience, when the town of Mansoul was in the keeping of Diabolus, used sometimes to cry out at such a rate that he made all the inhabitants afraid and so they put him in a very dark place and tried to put a gag in his mouth to keep him quiet. But for all that, sometimes when his fits came on he made the town feel very uneasy.

I know what conscience tells some of youit says to you, How is it you can forget Divine things? How can you trifle with the world to come? How can you live as if you never meant to die? What will you do when you come to die without an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ? And so that conscience may be quiet awhile, you make an excuse and persevere in refusing to come to the feast. It may be that you make this excuse to satisfy custom. It is not the custom of this present age to fly immediately in the face of Christ. There are not many men of your acquaintance or mine who ostensibly oppose religion.

Your father fears God. Your mother is a woman of great devotion. Your friends go to the House of God and speak experimentally of Divine thingsyou do not like, therefore, to say to them, I will never be a Christian! I dislike the ways of God! I do not choose the plan of Sovereign Grace, and therefore to spare their feelings you make an excuse. You do not want to grieve dear friendsyou are afraid if you spoke out honestly what your soul feels it might bring your mother with gray hairs to the grave, or make your fathers heart breakand so you make an excuse. And you think that they may entertain a comfortable hope whereas, while you make excuses, there is no hope for you at all.

For my part I would rather you speak outright and say what you mean! I would that you would say, I am an enemy of Christ. I do not believe His Gospel. I will not serve Him! This might sound very badly but it would show, at least, that there was some sincerity in you and we would hope that before long you might be bowed to the will of Christ. Excuses are

curses and when you have no excuses left there will be hope for you!

It may be you make these excuses because you have had convictions which so haunt you at times that you dare not oppose Christ to His face. You have gone home from the services to weep. That little chamber of yours is a witness that you cannot live altogether without prayer. The other day when you went to a funeral you came home with your mind very solemn and you thought, then, that certainly you would yield to the commands of Jesus. When you were sick and had that week or two upstairs alonethen you vowed and resolvedbut your resolves melted into thin air.

The tear starts in your eyesyou are almost persuaded to be a Christianyou breathe a prayer! But ah, some ill companion tempts you the next morning and there your are, according to the old proverb, The dog has returned to his vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Ah, how many times did I have convictions of sin and terrible ones, too, and yet I said, like Felix to Paul, Go your way for this time. When I have a convenient season, I will call for you?

But I could not quench these convictions by downright opposition to Christ. I knew too much and felt too much to do that, and so I tried to patch up a truce between my soul and my convictions. Satan is always ready to help men with excuses. This is a trade of which there is no end. It certainly commenced very early, for after our first parents had sinned one of the first occupations upon which they entered was to make themselves aprons of fig leaves to hide their nakedness! Read the Scriptures through and you will find that excuse-making has been a habit in all ages and among all classes of people.

And till the last sinner shall be saved by Sovereign Grace, I suppose men will still be setting up their vain excuses in the temple of God! If you will fire the gun, Satan will always keep you supplied with ammunition. When he thinks that a Truth is about to come home to you, if you cannot frame an excuse he will do it for you. He will run between you and the cannon shot of Gods Word to prevent your being wounded by it. If the preachers sword should be too sharp for you and make your conscience bleed, the Evil One has a Satanic plaster with which he very soon binds up the wound! The natural self-righteousness of man prompts him to frame apologies. We are all the best men in the world according to our own gauge and measure. If we could sit as judges upon ourselves, the verdict would always be Not guilty.

Sin, which would be very shocking in another, is very venial in us. No, what would be abominable in other men becomes almost commendable in ourselves so partially do we judge our own case. The sinner cannot think it quite right for himself to be an unbeliever in Christand since his enlightened conscience will not let him say that he is quite safe while he refuses to fly to the wounds of Jesushe runs to excuses in order that he may still say, I am rich and increased in goods, and not be driven to the unhappy necessity of crying, I am naked and poor and miserable.

Sinful self is hard to conquer, but righteous self is the worst enemy of the two. When we can make men plead guilty, then God pronounces absolution upon them. But while men will interpose their extenuations there is little or no hope for them. O great God our Master, tear away the excuses from every sinner here and make him stand guilty before Your bar in his own consciousness, that he may cry, God be merciful to me, a sinner, and find pardon through the blood of Jesus Christ! Take heed, O you ungodly ones, lest you go on excusing and excusing and excusing, until you excuse yourselves down to the pit of Hell! Know thisyou will never be able to excuse yourselves out again.

II. We come to RECOUNT these excuses. Many will not come to the great supperwill not Christians be on the same ground as those in the parable? They are too busy. They have a large family and it takes all their time to earn bread and cheese for those little mouths. They have a very large businessmany servants in their employand from the first thing in the morning to the last thing at night, if they do not see after business, their affairs would go wrong. Or else, if they have no business, yet they have so many pleasures and these require so much timetheir butterfly visits during the morning take up so many hoursthe dropping of their small pieces of pasteboard at other peoples doors occupy all their leisure and they really have no opportunity to think about matters so unpalatable as death and eternity.

This excuse scarcely needs a word from me to answer it because every man knows that it is grossly false. Nobody goes starving because he has not time to eat. Now, if God has given time for us to support our natural frame, much more has He given us time to feed the soul. I do not find my friends in the street half dressed. But I find some of them spend many a half-hour over that other pin and that other ribbon. Now surely if they have time to dress the body, they must have had time given them in which to put on the robe of righteousness and array the soul!

If you have not the time, God gave it to you and you must have misspent it. God gives you time as a steward and if you say to your Master, I have it not, He will reply to you, I entrusted it to you. You must have spent it on yourself. You have robbed God. A little earlier rising, a little less time at the tableeither of these might give you time enough. You know you have the time and when you say you have it not, the lie is too thinyou can see through it. O Soul! O Soul! When holy men can find hours for prayerwhen such a man as Martin Luther, when he was very busy, used to sayI must have three hours prayer today at least, or else I cannot get through my businessdo not tell me that you have not time to seek the Lord!

Besides, it is not an affair of time. Salvation may be worked in an instant! There is life in a look at the Crucified One. There is life at this moment for you. And between now and the time when this service shall have gone, there is time enough for you to have laid hold upon eternal life and to have received Christ Jesus to your souls salvation. That excuse will not do. But then they fly to another. They are too good. When I have preached Free Grace and a full Christ, I have heard some say, That is a good sermon for the crowd in a theaterfor ignorant, low-lived people. But we respectable people do not require such salvation. To offer a free salvation to men who are neither drunkards nor swearerswhy the thing is ridiculous! The sermon was very good for Magdalenes, for thieves and such

likebut not for us.

No, you are too good to be saved! You need not a physician because you are whole. Your own table has enough upon it. You do not need to come to this feast. But think, I pray you, whether this is not all a mistake! In what are you better than other men, after all? What if you do not indulge in open sinsdoes not your heart often go a-lusting towards evil? Does your tongue always speak that which is right and true? If you cannot remember sins of commission, what about the sins of omission? Have you fed the hungry? Have you clothed the naked? Have you taught the ignorant? Have you loved God with all your heart and soul and strength? Have you given Him all that He demands of you? Why you cannot say this!

Now the perfection, the holiness which God demands in order to salvation must be like a perfect alabaster vaseif there is a single crack or spot on itall is spoiled. You may say, Well, it is not much broken. We have not seriously damaged it. No, but God requires it to be perfect and no matter how slight the damage it may have sustained, you cannot enter Heaven upon the footing of your good worksyou are cast out forever! Hear these words, By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight. Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them. And, As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse. God save you from that false excuse!

Another class says, We are too bad to be saved. The Gospel cries, Believe in Jesus Christ and live, but it cannot mean me. I have been too gross an offender. When I was but young I went into evil and since then I have gone from bad to worse. O Sir, I have cursed God to His face! I have sinned against light and knowledge, against a mothers prayers and tears. I have spoken evil of Gods Word! I have laughed at the very name of His Son Jesus Christ! I am too evil to be saved. Here is another bad excuse. You know, Sinner, if you have been a hearer of the Gospel, that this is not true! For bad as you are, no man is excluded from Christ on account of his vileness. All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.

The invitations of the Gospel do not stop at a certain point of sin. On the contrary, they seem to select the worst sinners first. What did the Savior say? Begin at Jerusalem. But, Lord, the men who crucified You live there! Begin at Jerusalem. But, Lord, it was in Jerusalem that they shed Your blood and thrust out the tongue and laughed at You and made a mockery of Your prayers! Begin at Jerusalemthe worst firstjust as the surgeon in a battle is apt to look to the worst cases first. Here is a man who has lost his finger. Ah, well, let him bide awhile, we will see to that. But here is another who has lost a limb and he is bleeding fast and if the blood is not stopped, his life will ooze out. The surgeon sees him first.

O you great sinners, you who feel yourselves to have been notorious offenders, I pray you are not so guilty as to make this an excuse for not coming to Christ! On the contrary, use it as a reason why you should fly to Him at once. The more filth, the more need of washing. The more sick, the more need of a physician. The more hungry, the more welcome to the table. Come to Jesus just as you are, with all your sinsThough they are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. No form of sin imaginable or unimaginable can by any possibility be a bar to any mans salvation if he will but believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!

Then comes another excuse, Sir, I would trust Christ with my soul this morning, but I do not feel in any state to trust Christ. I have not that sense of sin which I think to be a fit preparation for coming to Christ

*If anything is felt, tis only pain*

*To find I cannot feel.*   
Ah, my dear Hearer, this is an excuse which looks like a very good one, but it has no truth in it! There is no fitness needed before you may trust in Christ! Whatever may be your present condition, if you trust Jesus Christ with your soul you are saved on the spot! Your sins are forgiven you! You are made a child of God! You are accepted in the Beloved! Where do you read of fitness for Christ in the Scriptures? Do you think the dead whom Jesus restored were fit to be raised? Why, Martha said of her brother, Lord, by this time he stinks, for he has been dead four days! Was there any fitness in Lazarus for a resurrection? And yet Jesus said, Lazarus, come forth! Does the Gospel say, He who is in a certain state, and then believes, shall be saved? No, but, He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.

How am I bid to preach to you? Am I to say, Whoever feels this is to come? No, but, Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely. Are you willing to have Christ? Then you may have Him, for Christ is as free to every needy sinner as the drinking fountain in the street is free to every thirsty passer-by. Trust Jesus, even if your heart is hard as graniteHe can soften it! Trust Him though conscience is asleepthough all the mental faculties are perverted! Trust Him! It is His business to make you holy, not your businesstrust Him to do it all! He is called Jesus because He saves His people from their sins!

Trust Him to overcome your corruptions, to kill your evil temper, to subdue your will, to soften your heart, to enlighten your conscience, to inflame your lovetrust Him to do it ALL! O, be not so foolish as to say, I am too ill to send for a doctorwhen I get better, when I feel better, then I will send for him. Do not say, I am so dirty. If I felt more clean, I would wash. Nowash because you are dirty! Wash because you have nothing but filth about you! Send for the Great Physician because there is no health in you! There is nothing in you but wounds, bruises and putrefying sores. Therefore let your faith entrust your healing entirely to Him.

Here comes another: O Sir, I would trust Christ with my soul, but it seems too good to be true that God should save me on the spot, this morning. You little know where I was last night, or what I did yesterday. You cannot tell who I am nor how bad I have been and you tell me that if I trust Jesus Christ, I shall be saved. Sir, it is too good to be true! I cannot imagine it. My dear Friend, do you measure Gods corn with your bushel? Because the thing seems an amazing thing to you, should it therefore be amazing unto Him? What if His thoughts should be as high above your thoughts as the heavens are above the earth? Is not this just what He has said in Scripture? I know you find it hard to forgive your fellow man, but

my Father, my God, can readily forgive you!   
*Crimes of such horror to forgive,   
Such guilty daring worms to spare   
This is Your grand prerogative   
And none shall in the honor share.*

He creates like a God! He does not make a few insects, or here and there a star! This great world He fashioned and He scattered the starry orbs about with both His hands. So when the Lord comes to pardon, He does not pardon some small offenses and wink at triflesbut the whole mass of sin He cleans away in a moment and all manner of sin and blasphemy, in an instant He casts behind His back. Believe that God is God and not such a one as you are! Believe that He is capable of doing greater things than you can dream of! Trust Him! Trust Him NOW and however good the things are you shall find them true! However great, they shall be yours! I think I hear one say, It is too soon for me to come. Let me have a little look at the world first. I am scarcely fifteen or sixteen. There is plenty of time for me.

Have you been to the graveyard Are there not there the records of those who have found fifteen or sixteen none too soon, for lo, at that age they were taken away to their last account? Too soon? Is it ever too soon to be happy? If religion made you miserable I might advise you to put it off to the last, but inasmuch as to be in Christ is to be happy, you cannot be in Him too soon! I have sat by many deathbeds and heard many regrets, but never did I hear a Christian regret that he was converted too soon! I have received many young converts into Church fellowship, but I never heard any one of them say they were sorry to be called by Grace so early!

If I were condemned to die and anyone should bring me a pardon, I should not think I received it too soon! The wrath of God abides on you can it be too soon to escape from it? You are the subject of daily temptations and you daily add to your sinscan it be too soon to have a new heart and a right spirit? Others will row in the opposite direction, pleading, Alas, it is too late! The devil first puts the clock back and tells you it is too soonand when this does not serve his turnhe puts it on and says, The hour is passed, the day of Grace is over! Mercys gate is bolted, you can never enter it!

Let us answer this at once. It is never too late for a man to believe in Jesus while he is out of his grave. While the lamp of life continues to burn, the vilest sinner who returns shall find Christ ready to receive him. There have been men converted at a hundred years of agewe have instances on record of persons who have even passed the century and become children of Christ Jesus! How old are you? Are you in the sere and yellow leaf of eighty? Ah, you have many sins, but what a triumph of Grace it will be when eighty years of sin shall all be washed away in a moment! I tell you that if you were as old as Methuselah and in every year of that long life you had as many sins as you have already committed in the whole eighty years, yet the Grace of Jesus Christ is sufficient to put all this away!

Your sins may mount up like mountains, but the love of Christ, like Noahs flood, can go twenty cubits upwards and the tops of the mountains shall be covered. It is not too soon! It is not too late! Neither of these reasons are of any value though they delude many. Well, says another, I would believe in Christ but I do not know whether I am one of Gods elect or not. Sir, that doctrine of election troubles me and staggers me. If I knew I was one of the elect, I would trust Christ.

That isif God will show you His secrets then you will do Gods will. And so the Almighty is to bend to your conditions and then you will do as He bids you? You will come to feast at the mans table if he will take you into his secret closet and show you all his treasure! He will do nothing of the kind! How foolish this talk is about election! The doctrine of election is a great and precious Truth of God, but it never can be a valid reason for a mans not believing in Christ! You are ill today and the doctor comes, There, says he, there is the medicine, I will guarantee if you take it, it will heal you. You say, Sir, I would take it at once, but I do not know whether I am predestinated to get over this fever. If I am predestinated to live, why then, Sir, I will take the medicine, but I must know first. Ah, says the doctor, I tell you what. If you do not take it you are predestinated to die.

And I will tell you thisif you will not believe in Jesus Christ you will be damned, be you who you maybut you will not be able to lay it at predestinations door! It will be at your own. A man has fallen overboard. A rope is thrown to him, but he says, I should like to grasp that rope only I do not know whether I am predestinated to be drowned. Fool! He will go down to the bottom with a lie in his mouth! We do not say, I would sit down to dinner today, but I will not eat because I do not know whether I am predestinated to have any dinner today. We do not talk so foolishly in common things! Why, then, do we so in religion? When men are hard up for an excuse they are glad to run to the mysteries of God to use them as a veil to cover their faces. O my dear Friends, you must know that though God has a chosen peopleyet when He commands you to believe in ChristHis having a chosen people, or not having a chosen people cannot excuse you from obedience to the Divine CommandBelieve on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

I could not attempt to go through all the excuses and therefore after handling two more, I will have done. Well, says one, if I were to believe in Christ I should be as bad, after a short time, as I used to be. I might be a little better for a time, but I should go back againso it is of no use trusting Christ. That is to say, dear Friend, Jesus Christ says if you trust Him, He will save youbut you say if you trust Him, He will not save you! That is what it comes to. Jesus Christ promises that if you trust Him, He will save you from your sins. You say, No, I should go back to my sins and be as bad as before.

Which am I to believeyour excuse, or His promise? Why, Christs promise, surely! But I tried once before, says one. Very likely you did, but Christ never tried! If He had tried He would have succeeded. Well, but, I did hold on a certain length of time. I dare say you didyou held on. But if Christ had hold of you, He would never have let you go. When you get hold of Christ you may soon drop Himbut when Jesus gets hold of you, He says, I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. If you had

greatly trusted Christ He would not have suffered you to become what you used to be. Well, says one, I cannot trust Christ, I cannot believe Him. You talk Latin, Brother! You talk Latin. No, you say, I do not talk Latin. Yes, you do. I will translate that word into the English for you. It

means, I will not. When you say, I cannot, it means, I will not. And understand, whenever the minister says, You cannot, he means, you will not, for he does not mean that you have any natural inability, but that you have a moral inability caused by your love of sina willful inability. I cannot, is the Latin, but I will not, is the English of it. A man once sent his servant to a certain town to fetch some goods. And he came back without them. Well, Sir, why did you not go there? Well, when I got to a certain place, I came to a river, Sir, a very deep riverI cannot swim and I had no boatso I could not get over.

A good excuse, was it not? It looked so. But it happened to be a very bad one, for the master said, Is there not a ferry there? Yes, Sir. Did you ask the man to take you over? No, Sir. Surely the excuse was a mere fiction! So there are many things with regard to our salvation which we cannot do. Granted, but there is a ferry there! There is the Holy Spirit who is able to do all things and you remember the text, 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? It is true you cannot make yourself a new heart, but did you ask for a new heart with sincerity and truth? Did you seek Christ? If you say, Yes, I did sincerely seek Christ and Christ would not save me, why then you are excused.

But there never was a soul who could, in truth, say that! There never was a sinner yet who perished seeking Christ and there never will be! And if your hearts sincere desire is after the salvation which is treasured in Christ Jesus, then Heaven and earth may pass away but Christ will never cast you out while His own Word stands, Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. Still, you say, I cannot trust Christ. Now, I am at issue with you hereI am at issue with every awakened sinner. I agree with you if you will let me give my own translation of the word cannotthat you will notbut if it is to stand as the word is generally used, I am at issue with you.

Suppose that you believe me to be an honest man. Would it be fair after that, to say, Sir, I cannot believe you? Now, if you believe me to be a liar, I can very well understand that you cannot trust me. But if you take it for granted that I am incapable of telling a falsehood and yet do not believe what I tell you, you are a liar! Now, you believe that Christ is incapable of falsehoodyou are not like those who are ignorant of the Character of Christ and therefore you know Him to be incapable of untruthfulness. And then you say you cannot believe Him? Seeing that Jesus Christ cannot but speak Truth, it cannot be a difficult thing for any man to believe what He speaks! If you have sufficient light given you by the Holy Spirit to know that Christ is the Truth, I believe you have sufficient power from the same source to believe what Christ says.

I trace this to Gods gift, but I pray you to exercise the power which you certainly have. Tell Christ you cannot believe Him? Will you tell Him that to His face when He sits upon the Judgment Seat at last? Will you dare to say this when His eyes of fire shall look you through and through? Most holy Christ, I could not trust You! Most truthful Savior, I could not believe You! I suspected You. I doubted You! Why did you doubt Me? What cause had I ever given you? Why did you think Me a liar? In what had I ever broken My promises, or when did I err from the Truth? He that believes not, says John, has made God a liar, because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son. O, think of this and never make that excuse again! Instead of saying, I cannot believe, say, I cannot make God a liar, I must therefore believe, for I know God is no liarI must therefore trust His Son Jesus Christ!

I have recounted a few of the excuses. Perhaps you will make another batch before the evening comes onyou who determine not to be saved. It is only the mighty Spirit of God who can sweetly constrain your will to yield to Christ and so I close with these two or three words, upon the third point.

III. HOW FOOLISH THUS TO MAKE EXCUSES! For first remember with Whom it is you are dealing. You are not making excuses before a man who may be duped by themyou make these excuses before the heartsearching God! My dear Hearers, let me speak very solemnly and push this point closely home. You know that God can see through all this why, then, do you hang up such thin veils? Confess before Him now your follyLord, I have been an enemy to You. Lord, I have been averse to Your Son, Jesus Christ, and therefore have I dreamed up these excuses forgive me. I see how foolish I have been. Grant that I may do so no more.

Remember again, what it is you are trifling with. It is your own soul, the soul which can never die! You are trifling with a Heaven which you will never see if you keep on with these excuses. You are trifling, Sinner, with that Hell which must be your never-ending portion if you continue as you are. Can you play with Hell-fire? O, can you make sport of Heaven? Can you laugh at the blood of Jesus? You are really doing so while you are thus halting between two opinions. If you must play the fool, find something cheaper to play with than this! O Sirs, if you must have mirth, I pray you have it out of something else than this.

To be saved! Listen to Heavens music! To be lost! Listen to Hells groans! Neither of these things are matters for you to play with. Say, as now you are sitting hereI pray God help you to say it before you leave this buildingLord, I have been trifling with eternity. I have been making frivolous excuses rather than I would accept Your love in Christ. I have trifled with Heaven and Hellgrant, Lord, that this may be brought to an endthat I may love and trust You this day.

Remember, again, that these excuses will look very different soon. How will you make excuses when you come to die, as die you must? When death gets the grip of you and the strong man fails. When they wipe the death sweat from your fevered brow. When the glaze of deaths night is coming over your eyeballswhat will you think of these excuses then? It may be you will rave with very fury at yourselves that you could have played with your souls to such an extent. What will you do with your excuses when you stand at the bar of Judgment? The trumpet rings, you have awakened from your grave, you stand amidst the myriads to be judged. The books are opened and Christ proclaims your doomDepart, you cursed, into everlasting fire. Will excuses comfort you then? Will you be able to say, then, Lord, it was too soon! Lord, it was too late! Lord, I was too great a sinner to believe in Jesus! Lord I did not need a Savior?

No, when the trumpet peals and the heavens are in a blaze. When the sun is turned into sackcloth and the moon into blood and the stars fall like fig leaves from the tree, you will find other work to do than excusemaking! You will weep and wail because of sin and when you are cast into Hell what will you make, then, of your excuses? Written in letters of fire you shall see in one tremendous arch above your heads, You knew your duty, but you did it not! You heard the Gospel, but you made excuses! Thundering more tremendous than the trump of resurrection shall come these words to you, Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded, I, also, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes. When your fear comes as desolation and your destruction comes as a whirlwind. When distress and anguish come upon you.

O, the Lord have mercy upon you, excuse-makers, and bring you to look to Jesus now! Now, I say, for the Scripture says, Today is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation. The only way to end your excuses is not by praying nor resolving, but by looking to Christ. There hangs the bleeding Savior on the Cross. He diesthe Just for the unjust to bring us to God! He suffers there that sin may be forgiven! Look to Him! Trust Him and you shall be saved! My Hearer, I give you now in Gods name this invitation, this commandtrust your soul to Jesus, the Son of God, who suffered for sinand you shall be saved!

But mind you, I may never meet you all this side the grave but I will meet you all at Gods Great Day and if you receive not Christ and trust in Him, I am clear of your blood. Upon my garments your doom cannot fall. You have heard the Gospel! You have been told to trust Jesus as you are! You have been assured that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to Him! You have been bid to come and now on your own heads be your souls ruin if you come not!

May the Spirit of God take these things and apply them to your souls. May He be as a fire and as a hammer in your soulsas a fire to melt, or as a hammer to break. And may you, today, with brokenness of heart take Christ to be your Savior, both now and forever. Amen.

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